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# Choir Stalls in Venice and Northern Italy

## Furniture, Ritual and Space in the Renaissance Church Interior

Volume 1. Text

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of Warwick, History of Art

April 2010

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# Acknowledgements

Firstly, I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for fully funding this research. Many people have also helped with the writing of this thesis.

I am especially grateful for the continued support of Charles Tracy, the acknowledged expert on English and north-European choir stalls. Conversations with him have been extremely useful and enlightening, as were his comments on a draft of Chapter One. Thanks are due to Anne Markham Schulz for very kindly sharing her English translations of Croatian material. I am also grateful to Gary M. Radke, who gave me useful advice and kindly shared material on San Zaccaria. Thanks are due to Rowland Cotterill for reading a draft of Chapter Three, and for disseminating his extensive knowledge of music history in numerous indepth conversations. Deborah Howard kindly let me accompany the CAMERA-Ve project to Venice in April 2007, which was extremely interesting and enjoyable.

In my travels in northern Italy, I was most fortunate in gaining access to every choir precinct I visited, and I am grateful to the individual churches and Curia offices which gave me permission. I am extremely grateful to the sacristan Giano Bano at the Frari in Venice, who enthusiastically allowed me unlimited access to the stalls and other areas in the church. I thank the staff of San Zaccaria for giving me free access to the old church and especially for letting me measure the stalls. In the library of Santa Giustina in Padua, Don Giulio Pagnoni o.s.b. was always helpful and kind and allowed me full access of the church.

I am very grateful to my good friend Zoë Willis for providing accommodation, feeding me and generally being fantastic on trips to Zadar and Venice. Clare Swindells and Anthony Alonzi have been very generous allowing me to stay with them in Coventry, as was Nina

Heydemann in Venice.

I am grateful for the moral support and encouragement from my parents, friends and colleagues, including Joanna Cannon, Federico Botana, Francesco Luchini, Stefania Gerevini, Matthew Woodworth, Zoë Willis, Sarah Burnett, Peter Fane-Saunders, Francois Quiviger and other staff at the Warburg Insitute. I have always received support from the History of Art department at the University of Warwick, especially from Louise Bourdua, Victoria Avery and Chiara Farnea in Venice.

Many thanks to Daniel Hadas for checking my Latin transcriptions and translations so thoroughly and efficiently and to Sarah Ferrari who very kindly checked my Italian translations. Thank you to Jon Allen, Ray Allen (who also kindly funded printing and binding), Dan Sheridan and Zoë Willis for proofreading the final version of this thesis.

My supervisor Donal Cooper has always been very attentive, caring and generous. I am extremely grateful for his inspirational tutorials, useful comments, career advice and practical help beyond the call of duty.

Finally, this thesis would not exist without the unwavering support and technical expertise of my partner, Dan Sheridan. He has patiently listened to my ideas, endured my long trips to Italy, and spent many hours writing new typesetting code. I dedicate this thesis to him.

# Abstract

This thesis seeks to re-establish the significance of choir stalls in Venice and northern Italy and seeks to place stalls in their artistic, liturgical and spatial context. Although now situated in remote locations in the church, stalls were once highly prized items of furniture and considered to be praiseworthy artistic structures in their own right. As the location for religious ritual, the elevated status of the choir area was reflected in the detailed and sophisticated design of its wooden furniture. Through an analysis of visual and documentary material, stalls will be brought to the fore to consider broader questions. What can documents reveal about Renaissance workshop practices and the relationship between craftsmen and patrons? How did the form of stalls reflect their use in religious ritual and the organisation of sacred space? How did choir furniture develop as an independent medium within the artistic context of the Renaissance church interior?

Four main topics will be considered in the first four chapters: the visual history of stalls; the contracting procedure; the use of stalls in liturgical practices; and changes to choir placement. Chapter One reconstructs the stylistic history of north-Italian choir stalls from the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries and contains an excursus on the development and meaning of intarsia iconography. Chapter Two focuses on choir contracts, which confirm that choir furniture was a considerable investment and a potential source of rivalry between church communities. Chapter Three moves the focus away from stalls as material objects to their role in liturgical practices. An excursus on the established use of misericords in Carthusian liturgy will demonstrate the close interaction between form and function in stall design, and places Italian stalls in the context of their European counterparts. The placement of choirs in the church interior will be examined in Chapter Four using case studies of choir placement in different secular and religious houses, in particular the



Franciscan Observants, Franciscan Conventuals and the Dominicans. Although changes in choir placement are often associated with liturgical reforms implemented by the Council of Trent, church renovations in fact occurred well before this period.

Two Venetian case studies demonstrate the value of examining individual choir precincts in their original stylistic and spatial context. Chapter Five focuses on stalls in the Benedictine nuns' church of San Zaccaria in Venice, completed by the Cozzi workshop in 1464. The choir precinct in the Frari in Venice is amongst the best-preserved choir precincts in Italy and is discussed in detail in Chapter Six; the circumstances of its construction are closely related to new choir furniture in the Santo in Padua. Specific terminology is explained and collated in the Glossary and an Appendix contains transcriptions and translations of significant documents.

## Abbreviations

AdA	Archivio dell'Arca, Basilica del Santo, Padova
ASB	Archivio di Stato Bologna
ASBr	Archivio di Stato Brescia
ASF	Archivio di Stato Firenze
ASP	Archivio di Stato Padova
ASPr	Archivio di Stato Parma
ASV	Archivio di Stato Venezia
ASVi	Archivio di Stato Vicenza
BCV	Biblioteca del Museo Correr Venezia
BMV	Biblioteca della Marciana Venezia
BQB	Biblioteca Queriniana Brescia

## Conventions

The positioning of stalls has informed labelling of them in this thesis. In precincts with two distinct ranges, stalls are labelled starting from the major stalls on each side: for instance, the third stall on the north side is labelled N3. In choirs positioned in semicircular formations, stalls are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., starting from the left.

All translations and photographs are my own unless specifically indicated otherwise.

Common abbreviations in transcriptions have been expanded with reference to Adriano Cappelli, *Dizionario di abbreviature latine ed italiane*, 4th edition (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1949).

A variety of Latin, Italian and Venetian terms were used in contemporary documentation to describe aspects of choir stalls, which, together with English terms, are listed in the Glossary on p. 284.

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# Introduction

The striking juxtaposition of Titian's *Assunta* and the choir precinct in the Frari is one of the great aesthetic experiences of Venetian art. As visitors pass through the arched choir screen, they encounter the imposing, luxuriously decorated choir stalls. Pale light illuminates their smoothly carved wood, revealing intricately carved figures, pictures in coloured woods and gilded angels. Almost a church within a church, the choir creates an impression of enclosure and privilege. Now rarely used, the empty stalls evoke a time when the basilica was enlivened with music, prayer and ritual.

The Frari choir is a surviving testament to the once conspicuous presence of wooden furniture in the Renaissance church interior. Choir stalls were essential features in the churches of northern Italy, at the centre of liturgical activities. Often prominently placed in front of the high altar, choir precincts segregated sacred space and formed a visual barrier between clergy and laity. Stalls themselves are highly decorated objects, often incorporating intarsia, carving and architectural motifs. Commissioned in detailed contracts, they were expensive projects which often took years to complete. In addition to their vital role in the performance of liturgy and music, ornate choir stalls were a source of pride and prestige for the church community.

Contemporary writers confirm the central significance of choirs in this period. The Milanese Canon Pietro Casola described numerous churches across the Mediterranean in the account of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1494. He stated that 'almost all the Venetian churches—the parish churches I mean—have a beautiful choir and an organ, and no expense is spared to decorate them'.<sup>1</sup> He was not, however, as impressed with Corfu Cathedral,

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<sup>1</sup>Translation from M. Margaret Hewett, *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the year 1494* (Manchester University Press, 1907), p. 138.

which had ‘no single vestige of a choir’, indicating that he considered stalls indispensable.<sup>2</sup> As a canon with his own stall in Milan Cathedral, Casola would have been intimately familiar with both the form and function of choir furniture. Somewhat less predictably, choirs were also of interest to laymen, who described both the layout of stalls and their visual appeal. For example, an anonymous Ferrarese diarist of the 1490s reported the latest changes in choir arrangements in Ferrara cathedral and the nearby church of San Domenico, revealing that such developments were worthy of note in general civic histories.<sup>3</sup> One of the most evocative descriptions of fifteenth-century stalls is the humanist Matteo Colazio’s eulogy on the choir of the Santo in Padua, constructed by the Canozi workshop in 1462–69 (Appendix B.1, p. 289). Colazio was astounded by the illusionistic effects of the intarsia panels and compared the Canozi brothers to ancient artists, calling them ‘Italian Apelleses’.<sup>4</sup>

Considering this contemporary enthusiasm and admiration for choir stalls, why has their significance largely been forgotten? Now located in dark and dusty areas behind the high altar, stalls are generally inaccessible to visitors. As unfamiliar, complex objects embellished with specialist techniques, they can be difficult to visually comprehend. Yet their centrality to Renaissance liturgical and devotional activities cannot be denied. Reinstating stalls as valid objects of study can help reconstruct the atmosphere and grandeur of the church interior. On a material level, choir stalls are complex objects which were constructed to precise specifications by specialist workshops. How did choir stalls develop as an artistic medium? Why were certain iconographies chosen for a place of prayer and meditation? Stalls were highly ornate, expensive objects which also fulfilled utilitarian needs, raising questions about their reception. Were stalls treated as practical objects or furniture of high artistic merit? How were they appreciated in relation to other artworks such as altarpieces?

In a broader sense, choir stalls were fundamental features in the church building as a whole. What can the study of choirs reveal about the use of space in the church interior? How did the placement of choirs change throughout the period? What role did stalls have

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<sup>2</sup>Translation from Hewett (1907), p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>In 1496 the diarist noted that the Dominicans of San Domenico had removed their choir to behind the high altar, and in 1498 he described the construction of the new *cappella maggiore* and choir stalls in Ferrara Cathedral. Giuseppe Pardi, ed., *Diario Ferrarese dall’anno 1409 sino al 1502*, vol. 24, R.I.S. No. 7 (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1933), pp. 193, 210. See also below, p. 167 and p. 178.

<sup>4</sup>Chiara Savettieri, ‘La ‘Laus perspectivae’ di Matteo Colacio e la fortuna critica della tarsia in area veneta’, *Ricerche di storia dell’arte* 64 (1998), p. 17: ‘italis Apellibus’.

in the life of the Renaissance church with its spatial segregations, solemn music and ritual? Can any consistencies be detected within religious orders in the style, commissioning or placement of choir precincts?

Despite a wealth of visual and documentary sources, modern literature on Italian choir stalls is sparse and often in obscure local publications. Scholarship on the subject comprises two main strands: discussions of the technique and meaning of intarsia panels which also encompasses *studioli* and sacristies; and monographs on individual artists, choir precincts or areas of Italy, often published locally.

General literature on intarsia concentrates on the origins of the technique, its development and distinctive iconography. In an exhaustive account of intarsia in choirs, sacristies and *studioli*, Massimo Ferretti drew together scholarship on the origin, meaning and technique of intarsia, stressing that the same motifs were used in differing locations.<sup>5</sup> Wilmering's discussion of intarsia in her study of the Gubbio *studiolo* focuses on the techniques, materials, tools and workshop practices.<sup>6</sup> Other texts on intarsia concentrate on the meaning of its characteristic iconography, and will be analysed in detail in Chapter One.<sup>7</sup> However, these publications on intarsia inevitably omit the numerous stalls featuring carving, tracery or Gothic architectural motifs.

Monographs on artists or choir precincts vary greatly in quality. Highlights include Pier Luigi Bagatin's studies on Ferrarese choirs, the Canozzi brothers and Fra Giovanni da Verona.<sup>8</sup> Other notable monographs include Sartori's work on the choir of the Santo in Padua, and Puerari's study on the Cremona Cathedral choir by Giovanni Maria Platina.<sup>9</sup> Publications combining archival evidence and restoration reports demonstrate that choirs can be subjected to detailed and rigorous art-historical research.<sup>10</sup> Local studies are

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<sup>5</sup>Massimo Ferretti, 'I maestri della prospettiva', in *Storia dell'arte italiana*, vol. 4 (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1982), pp. 459–585.

<sup>6</sup>Antoine M. Wilmering, *The Gubbio Studiolo and its Conservation. Volume 2: Italian Renaissance intarsia and the conservation of the Gubbio studiolo* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>See for example, Francesco Arcangeli, *Tarsie* (Rome: Tumminelli, 1942) and André Chastel, 'Marqueterie et perspective au 15e siècle', *La Revue des Arts* 3, no. 3 (September 1953), pp. 141–54.

<sup>8</sup>Pier Luigi Bagatin, *La Tarsia Rinascimentale a Ferrara* (Ferrara: Centro Di, 1991), Pier Luigi Bagatin, *Le Pitture Lignee di Lorenzo e Cristoforo da Lendinara* (Treviso: Antilia, 2004), and Pier Luigi Bagatin, *Preghiere di legno. Tarsie ed intagli di Fra Giovanni da Verona* (Florence: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2000).

<sup>9</sup>Antonio Sartori, 'I cori antichi della Chiesa del Santo e i Canozzi-dell'Abate', *Il Santo* I, no. 2 (1961), pp. 22–65. Alfredo Puerari, *Le Tarsie del Platina* (Milan: Banca Popolare di Cremona, 1967).

<sup>10</sup>For example, Caterina Furlan, Paolo Casadio and Elio Ciol, *Il coro ligneo del Duomo di Spilimbergo, 1475–77: storia, restauro, documentazione iconografica* (Spilimbergo: Spilimbergo Comune, 1997).

invaluable for detailing individual cases and providing transcriptions of documents, but tend not to place choirs in a wider context.<sup>11</sup> Older sources are also useful both for images and transcribed documents, but often lack detailed analysis.<sup>12</sup>

Besides general works on intarsia and monographs, no significant scholarship places north-Italian choir stalls in their documentary or stylistic context. Choir contracts have not been subjected to the same analytical treatment as contracts for painted or sculpted altarpieces.<sup>13</sup> Stalls have not been fully considered as functional objects with integral functions in liturgical and musical practices. As will be noted in Chapter Four, research on choir placement has significantly developed in recent years. Scholars have reconstructed original choir layouts and established the existence of early apsidal seating, but most research is from an architectural perspective rarely focussing on stalls themselves. Despite the significant interest in Italian tramezzi, the role of stalls in the use of sacred space has rarely been delineated. In an interdisciplinary project, Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti have investigated links between architecture and acoustics in Venetian Renaissance churches. As their work could shed light on the development of retrochoirs and the acoustic effects of wooden stall canopies, it will have important consequences for this study but it has not been possible to utilise its findings for this dissertation.<sup>14</sup>

The poor state of literature on stalls themselves is a significant lacuna in Renaissance art history. Unfamiliarity with contemporary choir terminology has led to misunderstandings. For example, the term ‘coro’ has been interpreted as the architectural superstructure of the *cappella maggiore*, whereas in contemporary documentation it normally referred to the stalls themselves.<sup>15</sup> The lack of rigorous scholarship on stalls has also led historians working on other material to make understandably ill-informed conclusions based on stall

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<sup>11</sup>For example, Giosuè Gurrieri and Grazia-Vittoria Gurrieri, *Il coro intarsiato di San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna* (Bologna 1985).

<sup>12</sup>See for example, the choir contract for San Francesco in Pavia transcribed in Rodolfo Maiocchi, *Codice diplomatico artistico di Pavia dall’anno 1330 all’anno 1550* (Pavia: B. Bianchi, 1937), vol. 1, pp. 288–89.

<sup>13</sup>See Hannelore Glasser, ‘Artists’ Contracts of the Early Renaissance’, Ph.D. thesis (Columbia University, 1965) and Michelle O’Malley, *The Business of Art. Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup>Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, Yale University Press, due for publication in October 2009. I am grateful to Deborah Howard for the opportunity to accompany the acoustic experiments in Venice.

<sup>15</sup>For example, see Da Lisca’s misinterpretation of the word ‘corum’ as the *cappella maggiore* in San Fermo in Verona. Alessandro Da Lisca, *Studi e ricerche originali sulla chiesa di S. Fermo Maggiore di Verona* (Verona: Società Cooperativa Tipografica, 1909), p. 50. See also below, p. 17n.

iconography.<sup>16</sup>

Venice and northern Italy have formed the basis for the study partly because of the quality and quantity of surviving stalls. The productive Canozzi workshop of intarsia stall manufacturers worked in Modena, Parma and Padua and influenced craftsmen across northern Italy. An analysis of choir contracts will show that there was great rivalry amongst churches to obtain the latest stall designs. Although Florence, Siena and Orvieto were important centres of intarsia production, there are few extant Renaissance stalls of high quality, in part due to later restorations. However, the quality of central Italian woodwork can be seen in surviving sacristy cupboards and domestic furniture such as *cassoni* and *spalliere*.<sup>17</sup> In his survey of fifteenth-century Florentine woodwork, Alessandro Cecchi lamented the loss of many choirs and other ecclesiastical furniture, which are however well-documented.<sup>18</sup> Many surviving stalls in central Italy were made by north-Italian artists, showing the predominance of the northern region. Examples include the intarsia choir of Monte Oliveto Maggiore near Siena by Fra Giovanni da Verona, and surviving panels from the choir of Pisa Cathedral by Cristoforo Canozzi, originally from Lendinara near Rovigo.

The present study aims to collate a large volume of visual and archival sources to place choir stalls in their artistic, liturgical and spatial context. Stalls from a relatively large geographical area have been covered (see a map in Fig. 1). The region encompasses an area of northern Italy from Milan in the west to Cividale in the east, and from Spilimbergo in the north to Bologna in the south. Stalls in the north-western regions of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta have been excluded because they developed a distinct local tradition influenced by French woodwork, considered in depth in a recent publication.<sup>19</sup> The region

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<sup>16</sup>For example, Mary-Ann Winkelmes used images of centrally-planned buildings in Cassinese intarsia stall panels as evidence that Cassinese monks were particularly interested in these structures. In fact, this was common intarsia iconography, as seen in panels by Fra Raffaele da Brescia for the Olivetan church of San Michele in Bosco in Bologna (1513–1521). Mary-Ann Winkelmes, 'Form and Reform: Illuminated, Cassinese Reform-style Churches in Renaissance Italy', *Annali di architettura* 8 (1996), p. 69.

<sup>17</sup>The recent exhibition 'Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence: The Courtauld Wedding Chests' (12 February–17 May 2009) at the Courtauld Institute of Art demonstrated the high quality of Florentine woodwork combined with painting. *Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence. The Courtauld Wedding Chests* (exhibition catalogue, London, The Courtauld Gallery 12 February–17 May 2009), ed. Caroline Campbell (London: The Courtauld Gallery in association with Paul Holberton Publishing, 2009).

<sup>18</sup>Cecchi concluded that Florentine choirs were 'oggi in gran parte perduti'. Alessandro Cecchi, 'Maestri d'intaglio e tarsia', in *Arti fiorentine. La grande storia dell'Artigianato. Il Quattrocento*, ed. by Franco Franceschi and Gloria Fossi, vol. 2 (Florence: Giunti, 1999), p. 215.

<sup>19</sup>Giovanni Romano, ed., *La Fede e I Mostri. Cori lignei scolpiti in Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta (secoli XIV–XVI)* (Turin: Fondazione Cassa di risparmio di Torino, 2002).

of the present study includes the cities of Ferrara and Verona which conserve an extensive corpus of stalls, and smaller towns such as Bobbio which retain only one surviving precinct. The study has not been limited by strict political divisions, reflecting the migrant nature of furniture workshops. However, choirs in the Dalmatian cities of Zadar, Trogir and Split have been included since they formed part of the fifteenth-century Venetian Republic. No stalls survive in Venice from before the mid-fifteenth century, but choir furniture from this early period exists in Dalmatia. Italian craftsmen produced stalls in Dalmatia from the late fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century, providing an insight into the appearance of contemporary Venetian furniture.

Choirs for both secular and religious communities have been included in this thesis. Impressive choir stalls were constructed in parish churches, cathedrals, houses of secular canons, and churches of the mendicant and monastic orders. Furniture produced in the same decorative tradition often did not vary significantly amongst diverse ecclesiastical patrons except perhaps in the selection of saints depicted. In fact, contracts indicate that churches often required craftsmen to imitate models outside their own order. Researching choirs without restrictions on patronage will allow a broader narrative to emerge, particularly of the general stylistic history.

Although situated in the broader period of the Renaissance, this study concentrates on the fifteenth century for several reasons. On a practical level, more stalls seem to survive from the fifteenth century than earlier or later periods. Stylistically, the Quattrocento witnessed a creative interaction between Gothic and Renaissance styles and combinations of woodworking techniques including intarsia, tracery carving and micro-architecture. A substantial corpus of documents from this period reveals the commissioning process of stalls, their use and their appreciation. Additionally, from the second half of the fifteenth century an increasing number of choirs were removed from their original location in the upper nave to behind the high altar. This radical change in the division of sacred space altered the use, arrangement and atmosphere of choir precincts.

Rare combinations of visual and archival material have required the citation of different choir precincts for each of the thematic chapters. Many highly decorated stalls lack extant documentation and conversely, contracts survive for furniture which has since been dismantled or destroyed. In addition, documents relating to Quattrocento choir removals

exist for churches which no longer possess their contemporary stalls, such as San Giobbe in Venice. Fortunately, some churches such as Sant'Ambrogio in Milan possess extant ornate furniture, a detailed contract and documents relating to choir placement. Due to unevenness in the material and for ease of understanding, material is presented in a thematic format. Four main topics will be considered in the first four chapters: the visual history of stalls; the contracting procedure; the use of stalls in liturgical practices; and changes to choir placement.

Chapter One reconstructs the stylistic history of north-Italian choir stalls from the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries. Placing them in the context of north-European stalls, their unique morphology will be described together with their distinctive visual properties and iconography. In the fifteenth century, a plurality of styles and techniques were employed exhibiting similarities with contemporary domestic furniture, altarpiece frames and roof construction. Chapter One also contains an excursus on the development and meaning of intarsia iconography.

Documentary material forms the basis of Chapter Two. Choir contracts record agreements concerning materials, techniques, iconography, cost and projected time scale. These detailed commissions have, however, been little studied compared to those for other artworks such as altarpieces. As well as providing precise information on the practical and financial aspects of choir production, the specialist terminology employed in these documents can aid the interpretation of further texts. Descriptions of disputes and litigations reveal the precise responsibilities of artists and patrons and give insights into construction practices.

Chapter Three moves the focus away from stalls as material objects to their role in liturgical practices. The function of stalls informed their ergonomic design, while their overall arrangement reflected the hierarchy of the religious or secular community. Liturgical guidelines from various traditions will be examined to show how stalls were used in religious ritual. An excursus on the established use of misericords in Carthusian liturgy will demonstrate the close interaction between form and function in stall design and place Italian stalls in the context of their European counterparts. As sites for the performance of music, choir stalls were often commissioned as part of a larger renewal in musical activities, extending to the construction of organs and the development of professional musical choirs.

The placement of choirs in the church interior will be examined in Chapter Four. The

removal of choirs to areas behind the high altar was a phenomenon which gained momentum in the second half of the fifteenth century. Although such changes are often associated with liturgical reforms implemented by the Council of Trent, church renovations in fact occurred well before this period. Case studies of choir placement in different secular and religious houses, in particular the Franciscan Observants, Franciscan Conventuals and the Dominicans, will reveal a complex narrative of choir placement in the fifteenth century. This chapter will investigate in particular the motivations behind such renovations, which were often practical and aesthetic and unrelated to liturgical considerations.

Two case studies on Venetian stalls will apply these four themes to specific choirs, placing them in their original stylistic and historical context. Chapter Five focuses on stalls in the Benedictine nuns' church of San Zaccaria in Venice, completed by the Cozzi workshop in 1464. The choir was commissioned in a highly detailed contract which employed precise Venetian terminology and imitation clauses. Liturgical documents and measurements of the surviving fabric have enabled a reconstruction of the furniture in the nuns' old church, alongside a new Renaissance basilica intended for public and state use.

The choir precinct in the Frari in Venice is amongst the best-preserved choir precincts in Italy and is discussed in detail in Chapter Six. Built in readiness for the convent's hosting of the tri-annual Franciscan General Chapter in 1469, the circumstances of its construction are closely related to new choir furniture in the Santo in Padua. The stalls themselves display distinctive iconographies including portraits of saints which correspond to altar locations in the basilica. The triumphal arch motif of the screen united artistic production at the Frari during this period and framed the high altar (and later Titian's altarpiece) in a way which subtly alluded to processional routes. The Frari choir precinct is a unique survival in its original position, and Chapter Six will offer explanations of how it escaped later renovations.

This thesis seeks to reestablish the significance of choir stalls in Venice and northern Italy. Although generally overlooked by scholarship, church furniture of this period was highly ornate, expensive and admired. Through an analysis of visual and documentary material, stalls will be brought to the fore to consider broader questions. What can documents reveal about Renaissance workshop practices and the relationship between craftsmen and patrons? How did the form of stalls reflect their use in religious ritual



and the organisation of sacred space? How did choir furniture develop as an independent medium within the artistic context of the Renaissance church interior?

## Chapter 1

# The Form and Decoration of North-Italian Choir Stalls

According to the judgement of many noble men and ambassadors who passed through our city, they thought amongst other things that our choir with its grand and wonderful design and the pictures of the large stall-backs with unheard-of perspective and such miraculous things, considering that they had seen innumerable other choirs, they all judged . . . that there will not be seen in Italy such a superb and most praiseworthy choir.<sup>1</sup>

In this letter, the Cremonese vicar Gianpietro Sforzosi's pride in his new choir stalls is palpable. Written in 1489, shortly before the completion of new stalls in Cremona Cathedral, the text shows the value placed on decorative choir furniture in this period. Choir precincts played a vital role in the everyday liturgical life of the church, and their form and decoration were invested with great significance. Richly ornamented stalls reflected the elevated status of the choir area and formed an integral part of the visual appeal of the whole church. In Cremona, the 'wonderful' and 'miraculous' stalls were a source of civic pride: an asset which placed the city on the map. Their aesthetic charm impressed noble

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<sup>1</sup>Puerari (1967), p.146n: 'secundo el iudicio de molti homeni degni, precipue ambasatori, quali passando per questa nostra città e credendo fra le altre cose dicto choro cum li grandi e maravigliosi principi et li quadri de le spalere mazore cum prospectiva inaudita et quam miraculosa asserendo loro aver veduto altri innumerabili chori tutti hano iudicato . . . che alii di presenti non serà visto in Italian un così superbo e degnissimo choro.' The letter was written by the vicar of Cremona Cathedral, Gianpietro Sforzosi to the Anziani of Reggio Emilia, on 24 May 1489, asking that a certain craftsman, Pietro della Tarsia, remain in Cremona until the completion of the choir by Michaelmas of the same year.

visitors to the church, who compared their design and perspective panels to other choirs in Italy. As the subject of such hyperbolic accolades, choirs were seen as ‘praiseworthy’ artistic structures in their own right.

Since many choirs are now in hidden, disused areas of the church, their artistic value is significantly less appreciated. No definitive published history of Italian choirs exists, and publications tend to concentrate on the intarsia technique, making little reference to overall stall design or carved furniture.<sup>2</sup> The sparse literature focusses on a few well-known craftsmen, such as the Canozzi brothers and Fra Giovanni da Verona. In fact, a large network of craftsmen specialised in church furniture, although many of them remain anonymous. Craftsmen travelled with their workshops across the region, disseminating motifs and designs across a large geographical area.

This chapter will introduce many unfamiliar objects and cover artistic centres outside major cities. Several choirs, such as those in San Colombano in Bobbio and San Vittore in Bologna, have only featured in local guidebooks and are little known amongst art-historians. Others, such as the stalls in San Fermo in Verona and Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna, barely even feature in local literature, and seem never to have been photographed for academic study. Discoveries of obscure furniture will broaden the picture of north-Italian church furniture and show that a multitude of different styles existed concurrently. The stylistic history witnesses the varying popularity of carving and intarsia. Carving and tracery dominated work in the Trecento, but in the following century the popularity of intarsia panels intensified despite the continuing presence of the micro-architectural Gothic style. Following the development of a virtuoso and painterly intarsia technique, relief carving returned to prominence in the mid-sixteenth century. Although northern Italy is an area rich in surviving church furniture, many liturgical choirs—including almost all Trecento stalls—are lost. Any attempt to reconstruct a stylistic history is therefore limited to the surviving material. As it is the aim of this chapter to reconstruct a general stylistic history, each choir precinct will be described only briefly, omitting individual issues of style and iconography.

In piecing together the visual history of north-Italian choir stalls in the medieval and

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<sup>2</sup>A recent book on the practice and development of the technique contains a full catalogue of intarsia furniture in Italy. Thomas Rohark, *Intarsien. Entwicklung eines Bildmediums in der italienischen Renaissance* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

Renaissance periods, certain questions emerge alongside the main analysis of their visual aspects. How did choir stalls compare to their non-Italian counterparts? Can any local styles be detected? Is there any stylistic or iconographic consistency amongst churches of the same religious order? How did choir stalls relate to contemporary domestic furniture and other woodwork?

## 1.1 Terminology and measurements

As choir stalls are generally unfamiliar objects, specific terminology will be explained here and collated in the Glossary (p. 284).<sup>3</sup> The furniture was built on a secure wooden framework, which remains mostly hidden. Precise structural forms varied, but a recent restoration report of stalls in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice provides an explanation of basic constructional elements (Fig. 2). In the Frari, the floor under the choir is a rubble surface, upon which a series of low brick walls (no. 1 on the diagram), aligned parallel to the stalls, support the structure, separating the wooden elements from the potentially damp ground.<sup>4</sup> Larch planks rest directly above the bricks (no. 2), and above these, perpendicular larch planks are placed, which correspond to the divisions between stalls (no. 3). Vertical posts between each stall (no. 4) are attached to the horizontal planks, creating a sturdy framework for the seating.<sup>5</sup> Further vertical pieces (no. 5) were fixed to the lower sections of these vertical supports, carved with an inclined groove to allow for the seat-backs to be gently tilted.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 3 shows the main visible parts of a typical stall. The seat itself swings up towards the seat-back (the slightly inclined panel at the rear) which was often decorated with intarsia patterns. Between the seats, the standards are pierced with a quadrant culminating in a carved hand-rest for use by the occupant when seated. Above seat level, the seat-capping provides the main horizontal structural support, effectively clamping the seats together. The projecting seat-capping elbows function as arm-rests for standing

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<sup>3</sup>I am very grateful to Charles Tracy for his help in terminology.

<sup>4</sup>The first brick wall corresponds to the kneeler between the first and second rows of stalls; the second under the seats of the second row; the third between the second and third row; and the fourth beneath the back of the third row seats. Capovilla Pruneri, 'Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Disinfestazione antitarlo al coro ligneo (aprile-ottobre 2002)', 2002, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>In the first and second row of stalls, poplar panels were used for the vertical elements. Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 3.

occupants. The capping is cut from single pieces of wood (usually walnut) five to seven centimetres deep, encompassing several stalls. Between the seat-capping and canopy base, stall-dividers separate one stall from another and provide some vertical stability. Stall-dividers could be carved with elaborate foliate designs or architectural motifs. The stall-back is a large rectangular panel between the seat-capping and canopy-base, often filled with intarsia or tracery designs. The canopy (often taking the form of a shell-niche or Gothic gable) rests on a projecting horizontal canopy-base. Alternatively, stalls could be surmounted by plain or carved cornices.

North-Italian stalls do not vary greatly in dimensions at seat level. Seats are generally between seventy and seventy-two centimetres wide, and between forty and forty-five centimetres high.<sup>7</sup> Their height to the top of the seat-capping varies between 100 and 105 centimetres. The same measurements occur across the region, despite local units of measurements varying considerably.<sup>8</sup> Unusually, in the 1512 contract for the choir of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, the exact size of the stalls was specified. They had to be about six *braccie* and six *once* high, one *braccie* and four *once* wide, and the choir precinct itself had to measure three *braccie* and nine *once* from the upper stalls to the limit of the substalls.<sup>9</sup> Measurements of the stalls in San Giovanni Evangelista show that the contracted specifications were followed almost exactly.<sup>10</sup> The awkward description of the dimensions suggests that they were converted from standard furniture measurements, used by woodworkers throughout the region.

Further terminology describes the plan of the choir precinct (Fig. 4). In choirs of multiple rows positioned in a rectilinear format, substalls would be arranged in sections to allow access to the upper stalls. Return stalls are positioned at the west end of the

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<sup>7</sup>Tracy has shown that measurements of fifteenth-century English stalls are much less consistent, with seat widths varying between 630mm and 680mm. Charles Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls 1400–1540* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>None of the local measurements for *braccio* or *pie* match up with the standard stall width, except in Vicenza where two *pie* measure 0.71m. Angelo Martini, *Manuale di metrologia ossia misure, pesi e monete in uso attualmente e anticamente presso tutti i popoli* (Rome: Editrice E. R. A., 1976), p. 823.

<sup>9</sup>Bruno Adorni, ed., *L'abbazia benedettina di San Giovanni Evangelista a Parma* (Parma: Cassa di Risparmio di Parma, 1979), p. 170: 'Item che dicte sedie siano de altezza braze 6 onz 6 vel circa, et siano large braze 1 onze quatro. Item che da le dicte sedie de sopra alo antipecto de mezo sian brazi 3 onze 9 vel circa.'

<sup>10</sup>A Parmese *braccia* measures 545mm and an *oncia* measures 45mm. The height of the stalls is roughly 3190mm but was contracted to be 3480mm (6 *braccie* and 6 *oncie*). The width of the stalls varies between 730mm and 740mm, and the calculation in the contract works out at 726.8mm (1 *braccia*, 4 *oncie*). The distance from the back of the upper stalls to the footrest of the substalls is 2040mm, almost equal to the specified measurement of 2025mm (3 *braccie* and 9 *oncie*). Martini (1976), p. 507.

precinct facing east, and meet the lateral stalls at right angles in an intersection known as a stall junction. The two stalls at the entrance to the choir are generally reserved for dignitaries, while terminal stalls are situated at the east end of each upper and lower row. The exposed side of a terminal stall is a stall-end, and could be decorated with inscriptions, patterns, or narrative carvings, as in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan (Fig. 6). Choirs positioned in semi-circular formations behind the high altar also have upper stalls and substalls arranged to facilitate access (Fig. 5). Two terminal stalls form the west extremes of the rows, while dignitaries’ stalls (either one, two or three) are situated in the centre. Many stalls in northern Italy were originally arranged in rectilinear formations and later moved to semi-circular areas, requiring terminal and dignitaries’ stalls to be moved.

A variety of intarsia techniques were used in north-Italian stalls. In both Gothic and Renaissance stalls, intarsia *a toppo* friezes were ubiquitous, framing the stall-backs and seat-capping. This technique involves gluing together tiny polyhedral wood sections of different species to form a solid loaf or block, about five centimetres in depth (Fig. 7). This was thinly sliced to produce ten to twelve identical fillets which were inlaid into a solid walnut matrix in the furniture.<sup>11</sup> Intarsia *a toppo* was mass produced by specialist workshops and purchased for use on choir stalls and domestic furniture, which also display the same friezes. Identical intarsia *a toppo* patterns decorated choirs by different workshops, showing that stalls cannot be attributed on the basis of these patterns.<sup>12</sup>

Wider strips of intarsia *a toppo* were also used to embellish the upper parts of substalls. These patterns were generally more complex. For example, the fifteenth-century Cozzi workshop used designs including interlaced eight-pointed stars, repeating portals with open doors, and wells beneath water channels. Patterns showing chairs or stools in perspective were used on fifteenth-century stalls produced by the Cozzi and Canozi workshops (Fig. 8).<sup>13</sup> In an essentially playful manner, the viewer was invited to compare the micro images of chairs and the macro versions they adorned. Larger *a toppo* panels (often around 225mm square) were also produced depicting perspective scenes of architecture and

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<sup>11</sup>Wilmering (1999), pp. 64–73.

<sup>12</sup>For example, the same distinctive pattern of a stylised chair or box was used on the stalls in Cremona Cathedral, executed by Platina in the 1480s, and the earlier stalls of San Francesco in Brescia, still Gothic in overall design. Since Brescia and Cremona are geographically close, both workshops probably used the same mass supplier of *a toppo* strips.

<sup>13</sup>Stools were depicted on benches now situated in the nave of Parma Cathedral, and on the substalls of Ferrara Cathedral.

interiors.<sup>14</sup> Although similar to figurative intarsia on an iconographic level, these panels were constructed en masse, creating series of identical scenes.

Other techniques included intarsia *a buio*, also known as spindle-wood intarsia or *commesso di silio*. This involved inlaying a light coloured wood, often spindle-wood, into a darker matrix, creating a decorative linear design.<sup>15</sup> Intarsia *alla certosina* used bone or mother-of-pearl inlaid into a matrix wood to create geometric patterns, often combined with intarsia a toppo.<sup>16</sup> Cartoons for perspective or figurative intarsia panels were transferred onto single pieces of matrix wood, usually walnut. Sections of the matrix wood were excavated, in which tesserae of different coloured woods were fixed with glue and sometimes wooden pegs. Work would begin with the larger pieces, progressing to smaller details, the whole being planed after each application.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.2 Fourteenth-century stalls in northern Italy

Few Italian stalls survive from the Trecento, as many were replaced by fifteenth- or sixteenth-century versions. However, a small number of choirs from this period still exist in northern Italy, some of which have been overlooked by scholars. Stalls from this period were precedents for fifteenth-century Gothic woodwork and throw into relief the later radical stylistic shift to intarsia.

The stalls in the Arena Chapel in Padua, dated 1303–05, are some of the oldest still in their original location (Fig. 9).<sup>18</sup> They were executed contemporaneously with Giotto's frescoes, some of which depict similar wooden fittings, as Laura Jacobus has recently noted.<sup>19</sup> The stalls are in two locations in the chapel; a set of nine stalls in the chancel (five on the south wall and four on the north), and a second set of twelve stalls in the

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<sup>14</sup>See Furlan, Casadio and Ciol (1997), p. 84.

<sup>15</sup>Wilmering (1999), p. 73.

<sup>16</sup>Wilmering (1999), p. 81.

<sup>17</sup>Wilmering (1999), p. 84.

<sup>18</sup>The chapel was dedicated in 1303 and consecrated in 1305. Davide Banzato et al., eds, *La Cappella degli Scrovegni a Padova*, *Mirabilia Italiae* no. 13 (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2005), Text volume, pp. 29–30.

<sup>19</sup>Giuliana Ericani has dated the stalls to around 1303. Banzato et al. (2005), Text volume, p. 254. Jacobus noted that the organic motif in the stall-dividers was similar to a bench-canopy in the fresco of *Christ before Caiaphas and Annas* and gallery supports in the *Wedding at Cana*. Rather than suggesting any clear influence between the stalls and the frescoes, Jacobus uses the similarity to support the contemporaneous dating of the furniture. Certain early fourteenth-century coins recently found in the wooden joinery of the stalls also confirm this dating. Laura Jacobus, *Giotto and the Arena Chapel. Art, Architecture and Experience* (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2008), pp. 46–47.

eastern part of the nave. Jacobus suggests that the latter stalls could have been used by the Cavalieri Gaudenti, a chivalric religious order of which Enrico Scrovegni was a member.<sup>20</sup> The chancel stalls have stone three-dimensional canopies consisting of trefoil-cusped gables (which are an integral part of the chapel walls), while the functional parts of the furniture—the seat, stall-back and stall-dividers—are wooden.<sup>21</sup> Simplified organic carving occupies the stall-dividers, while the quadrants are flat concave curves. The stall-backs are composed of horizontal wooden panels painted in alternating cream and green creating an effect of fictive stonework.<sup>22</sup> The polychromy reflects the stone canopies and continues Giotto's fictive marble panels painted on the lower parts of the chapel walls. The stalls in the nave have the same painted woodwork but lack the stone canopies of the chancel stalls, while a desk construction in front of the stalls with attached hinged seats faces the centre of the nave, also painted in alternating cream and green.<sup>23</sup> In the Arena Chapel, the combination of stone, wood and paint demonstrates how stalls could be expertly integrated with their surroundings. Similar effects, if they existed, cannot be detected in most choir precincts in northern Italy, where original furnishings, architecture and painted decoration have been radically altered.

Later stalls in the Cappella di San Giacomo in the Basilica del Santo in Padua can be dated to the 1370s (Fig. 10).<sup>24</sup> In the chapel, frescoed by Altichiero and Jacopo Avanzi, sixteen stalls have stone canopies composed of gables, trefoil cusping and stumpy pinnacles, in a similar design to the Arena Chapel stalls. Under the stone canopies, painted busts of saints appear. The carved wooden stalls beneath, however, are modern replacements.<sup>25</sup> The Santo stalls have a similar combination of stone, wood and paint to the Arena stalls,

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<sup>20</sup>Jacobus (2008), p. 27.

<sup>21</sup>Jacobus discovered that the stone canopies extend into the walls and are visible on the exterior of the chancel. Jacobus (2008), p. 47.

<sup>22</sup>According to Ericani, the present paintwork dates from restorations executed between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, but reproduces the original polychromy. Banzato et al. (2005), Text volume, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup>There were originally nine stalls on the south side and seven on the north. Jacobus (2008), pp. 50–53.

<sup>24</sup>The architectural elements of the chapel were commissioned by Bonifacio de Lupi to Andriolo de Santi on 12 February 1372. See Document X in Antonio Sartori, 'Nota su Altichiero', *Il Santo* 3, no. 3 (1963), p. 311. On 19 October 1376, Lupi agreed with the friars of the Santo that they would say mass three times every day in the chapel, implying the existence of the stalls at this date. See Document XI in Sartori (1963), pp. 314–15.

<sup>25</sup>In 1852 Gonzati described the wooden part of the stalls: 'l'inferiore, in legno, con parte dei dossali e delle braccia, va intagliata, vagamente a fogliami.' Bernardo Gonzati, *La basilica di S. Antonio di Padova* (Padua 1852), pp. 186–87. This suggests that the replacements we see today are faithful copies of the original carved elements.



which set an important local precedent.

A similar spirit of artistic integration was developed in the Franciscan church of San Fermo in Verona. Although not the subject of any scholarly study, the stalls formed part of the generous patronage of Guglielmo Castelbarco from 1314, when Daniele Gusmari was friar of the Franciscan convent.<sup>26</sup> A more precise dating could be around 1330, the date Andrea De Marchi suggests a new tramezzo was built further east, leaving more room for the laity and frescoes intended for a lay audience, such as the *Lignum Vitae Sancti Francisci* on the north nave wall.<sup>27</sup> The twenty-five stalls, now situated behind the high altar, show an array of decorative techniques (Fig. 11).<sup>28</sup> Stall-dividers are composed of two foliate volutes, and twisted mouldings with conoid tops decorate the stall standards. A coved canopy is surmounted by an architrave, consisting of a thick cable moulding and smaller dentil frieze.

Each stall-back is divided into six sections: two lower rectangular fields show the remains of decorative intarsia *a toppo* arranged into lozenge patterns; and on four upper panels, small pinked lozenges are fixed with metal studs and arranged to form star shapes in the negative spaces (Fig. 12). In the fifteenth century, a similar technique was used on the choir lectern base in San Zeno in Verona where studs were placed in the centre of the lozenges rather than at the edges (Fig. 13).<sup>29</sup> This delightful decorative pattern was also employed on a larger scale on the west doors of Sant'Anastasia in Verona<sup>30</sup> where the studded horizontal and vertical stiles form a pattern of barbed quatrefoils (Fig. 14).<sup>31</sup> This

<sup>26</sup>Portraits of both men were executed on the triumphal eastern arch of the church, together with the inscription 'VITRAS, PICTURAM, NAVEM, CORUM ET ALIA PLURA, OFERT TIBI, CHRISTE, DANIEL PAUPERCULUM ISTE' showing that the choir was part of the restoration project. Paolo Golinelli and Caterina Gemma Brenzoni, eds, *I santi Fermo e Rustico. Un culto e una chiesa in Verona* (Verona: Parrocchia di San Fermo Maggiore in Verona, 2004), p. 181. Castelbarco was appointed podestà of Verona by the Scaligeri in 1285, and was an enthusiastic patron of both the Dominican and Franciscan orders in Verona. Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 64.

<sup>27</sup>Andrea De Marchi, 'Due fregi misconosciuti e il problema del tramezzo in San Fermo Maggiore a Verona', in *Arredi liturgici e architettura*, ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milan: Electa, 2007), p. 139.

<sup>28</sup>Da Lisca interpreted the word 'corum' as the *cappella maggiore*, or presbytery, behind the high altar. Da Lisca (1909), p. 50. As the choir was located in the nave until 1573 when the classical 'pergula' was built around the altar, the inscription in fact referred to the furniture placed in the nave. Paolo Lino Zovatto, 'Le Pergule monumentali della Cattedrale e di S. Fermo Maggiore di Verona', *Vita veronese* 10 (1957), p. 181.

<sup>29</sup>Ederle dates both the stalls and the lectern in San Zeno to the mid-fifteenth century. Guglielmo Ederle, *La basilica di S. Zeno* (Verona: Edizioni di "Vita Veronese", 1953), p. 24.

<sup>30</sup>Scapini dated the central portal to around 1330 and Cappelletti did not provide a date for the doors, but confirmed that they were original. Arturo Scapini, *La chiesa di Santa Anastasia* (Verona: Edizioni di "Vita Veronese", 1954), p. 11. Giovanni Cappelletti, *La basilica di S. Anastasia* (Verona: Edizioni di "Vita Veronese", 1981), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>The persistence of fourteenth-century woodworking techniques into the fifteenth century is shown by

was possibly a local technique, as it does not appear on extant woodwork outside Verona.

Above each stall in San Fermo, the coving is divided vertically into three sections by scrolled dividers, and horizontally into seven sections by cable moulding. By segmenting the canopy in this distinctive way, the stalls reflect the nave roof, also completed in the first half of the fourteenth century (Fig. 15).<sup>32</sup> In the roof, curved sections were framed by cable and dentil friezes and subdivided into square fields, creating a similar segmented effect to the stall canopies. As the choir was originally situated in the nave, a striking symbiosis would have been created between the stalls and the roof, experienced most vividly by the friars themselves when seated in the choir.

Frescoes around the pulpit on the south side of the nave, completed by Martino da Verona and Antonio da Mestre in 1396, show the influence of church furniture on painting.<sup>33</sup> The stalls occupied by Doctors of the Church are composed of pierced dividers and twisted standards similar to the stalls, seen most convincingly in the seat on the lower left (Fig. 16). Foliate carving of upturned stylised leaves encircled by semicircular stems are repeated in the painted seats. As in the Arena Chapel, the San Fermo choir stalls were integrated with the overall decoration of the church, and display decorative techniques used in roof and door construction.

The choir stalls of Verona Cathedral can also be dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, based on stylistic affinities with the stalls of the Arena Chapel and San Fermo (Fig. 17).<sup>34</sup> The stalls were certainly in existence in the early Quattrocento. A document of 1418 confirms that a dignitary was given a stall in the choir<sup>35</sup> and when the vault over the choir was built in the 1440s, the choir stalls themselves were already in existence.<sup>36</sup>

the nave roof of San Zeno in Verona, probably completed around 1386–88 and the similar roof over the sacristy, constructed in the fifteenth century. For the dating of the nave roof see Maria Teresa Cuppini, ‘L’arte gotica a Verona nei secoli XIV–XV’, in *Verona e il suo territorio*, vol. 3 (Verona: Istituto per gli studi storici veronesi, 1969), p. 238.

<sup>32</sup>Da Lisca states that the part of the roof abutting the triumphal arch at the entrance to the *cappella maggiore* must have been completed in 1314, but that the rest of the roof was completed around 1350. Da Lisca (1909), pp. 59–60

<sup>33</sup>The pulpit was donated to the church by Barnaba da Morano in 1396. Tiziana Franco, ‘Tombe di uomini eccellenti (dalla fine del XIII alla prima metà del XV secolo)’ in Golinelli and Brenzoni (2004), p. 257.

<sup>34</sup>Ericani has dated the Verona stalls to between 1303, when the chapter of canons was founded, and 1336, the date of a new synod. Banzato et al. (2005), Text volume, p. 256. Two unidentified coats of arms are triangular shields divided per bend sinister, decorated in the upper section with an eagle and three small rosettes, and in the lower with a nebuly pattern.

<sup>35</sup>ASV, Notai busta 24, 37v: ‘vir dominus albanus mauroceno . . . assignetur stallum in choro’.

<sup>36</sup>Canon Antonio Malaspina gave money for the vaults in his will of 1440: ‘videlicet quod totus chorus maioris ecclesie Verone ponatur in volta, videlicet quod in choro medio fiat una volta in crosaria, que capiat

Pierced stall-dividers dominate the cathedral stalls, while the stall-backs and gently-inclined continuous coved canopy were simply constructed from horizontal panels. Visual interest was concentrated on the lateral view of the stalls, from where the carved dividers created an effect of richness and luxury. Based on the San Fermo carving, leaves in the upper volutes have five leaflets (as opposed to three on the San Fermo stalls) and an additional flower bud above. Further parallels with the San Fermo stalls are twisted standards between the stalls and cable moulding above the canopy. At either end of the two ranges, lions rampant climb amongst the foliage and bare their teeth in a rather unthreatening manner (Fig. 18). The technique used, known as *ajouré*, is pierced carving which compromises the three-dimensional quality of the figure with the flatness demanded by its location.<sup>37</sup> Comparable fifteenth-century lions in this technique were used to frame choir benches in Split Cathedral in Dalmatia (Fig. 19).<sup>38</sup> The lions are in almost identical poses (although they face opposite directions) and have a similar interaction with the twisted columns and foliage.

Another Dalmatian example, the choir of St Francis in Zadar, displays a similar overall design to the Verona Cathedral choir (Fig. 20). Carved by Giovanni son of Giacomo de Borgosansepulcro around 1394, the stalls have continuous coved canopies topped with cable moulding, nail-heads and foliage friezes.<sup>39</sup> Most of this upper section was replaced in 1891, but parts are original, suggesting that the restoration was sympathetic.<sup>40</sup> The stall-backs are divided into three fields filled with relief decoration, while stall-dividers display two foliage volutes similar to their Veronese counterparts. As in Verona, the Zadar terminal stall-ends are carved *ajouré* and show the patron saint of Zadar—St Chrysogonus—on the

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*medietatem ipsius chori*. Pierpaolo Brugnoli, *La cattedrale di Verona nelle sue vicende edilizie dal secolo IV al secolo XVI* (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1987), p. 184.

<sup>37</sup>‘*Ajouré*’ is defined as ‘a French term applied to pierced or perforated metalwork’ in John Fleming and Hugh Honour, *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 16. The term was used by Anne Markham Schulz in her recent article on choir stalls. Anne Markham Schulz, ‘The choirstalls in the Venetian church of S. Stefano and related works by Leonardo Scalamanzo’, *The Burlington Magazine* 150, no. 1267 (October 2008), p. 657.

<sup>38</sup>Jackson attributed the carving of the stall backs to the same artist who made the cathedral doors at Split in 1214, Andrea Guvina (sometimes called Buvina). He attributed the lion carvings on the stall-ends to Venetian craftsmen of the early fifteenth century. Thomas G. Jackson, *Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria* (London: The Clarendon Press, 1887), vol. II, pp. 50–51. Quoted in Muriel Currey, *Dalmatia* (London: Philip Allan, 1930), pp. 72–73.

<sup>39</sup>A contract requiring the craftsman to complete the work within one month is dated 20 May 1394 and is transcribed in Ivo Petricioli, *Umjetnička obrada drveta u Zadru (Wood carving of the Gothic period in Zadar)* (Zagreb 1972), pp. 117–18.

<sup>40</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 32.

left terminal and a dramatic portrayal of the stigmatisation of St Francis on the right.<sup>41</sup> Given the level of artistic exchange with Dalmatia in the fourteenth century, these examples can give possible indications of the appearance of lost stalls in northern Italy.

Whereas in fourteenth-century Veronese and Dalmatian stalls foliate carving was emphasised, the first extant examples in northern Italy of wooden Gothic architecture were developed in San Domenico in Ferrara (Fig. 21).<sup>42</sup> Dating to 1384, the choir of San Domenico survived the rebuilding of the original medieval church. Decorated stall-backs dominate the choir, composed of circular tracery patterns (all unique) set within carved lozenge frames. The coved canopy displays four rectangular panels containing further carved lozenges, framed by cable moulding. In the stall-dividers, Gothic tracery is topped by foliate volutes, while beneath the seat-capping, twisted columns continue the architectural theme. On the terminal stall-ends, two-light Gothic windows with twisted columns pierce an oculus, which originally would have contained a painted coat-of-arms (Fig. 22). On the north terminal stall, an inscription states that Tommasina Gruamonti, wife of Azzo d'Este, donated the furniture in 1384, and a further inscription on the seventh stall from the left names the artist, Giovanni da Baiso.<sup>43</sup>

Remains of choir stalls from Santa Maria in Carrobbio in Bologna, completed in 1374 and also attributed to Giovanni da Baiso, were reused on the Bolognini Chapel altar frontal in San Petronio (Fig. 23).<sup>44</sup> A comparison with the Ferrarese stalls shows striking similarities, including lozenge frames filled with roundels, carved foliage in triangular spandrels, and a dentil frieze. In the Bolognese panels, roundels contain half-length reliefs of saints including Christ the Redeemer.<sup>45</sup> In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Baiso workshop was run by Giovanni's sons Alberto and Arduino, who produced a large quantity of furniture, all now lost.

<sup>41</sup>The stalls are currently arranged around three sides of a chapel behind the high altar, but originally would have been in front of the high altar. An additional stall-end in the church museum depicts St Benedict, which Petricoli argued belonged to the St Francis choir. Petricoli (1972), pp. 29–31.

<sup>42</sup>The canopies in the two Paduan stalls mentioned above, although related to Gothic forms, were carved of stone.

<sup>43</sup>The inscription above stall 7 reads: 'HOC OPUS FECTI MAGISTER IOHANNES DE BAISIO DE MUTINA' and the inscription on the north terminal reads: 'ZENTIL NOBIL DONA MADONA THOMASINA/ DI GIUAMONTI NATA, DE MESER DUX FIA/ A SERVI DE CHRISTO SEMPER BENIGNA PIA/ DA SI MOVESTA PER LA GRATIA DIVINA/ COMINZARE MI FE CUM DUCATI DOSENTO/ PRINCIPIO FO E MIO COMINZAMENTO/ MCCCLXXXIIII'. See Bagatin (1991), p. 12. Luisa Bandera Gregori, *Il mobile emiliano* (Milan: Görlich editore, 1972), p. 6.

<sup>44</sup>The panels were transported to San Petronio in 1819. Mario Fanti and Carlo Degli Esposti, *La Basilica di San Petronio in Bologna. Guida a vedere e a comprendere* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1986), p. 45.

<sup>45</sup>These are similar to the half-length figures in canopies in Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, dated 1469–71.

Perhaps the most highly decorated surviving stalls from the fourteenth century are in the Tempietto Longobardo in Cividale del Friuli (Fig. 24). Although historian Giusto Grion dated the stalls to the mid-fifteenth century, Giovanni Maria Del Basso showed that the heraldic eagle carved on the abbess's stall in fact belonged to abbess Margarita della Torre (1371–1390).<sup>46</sup> This earlier dating is convincing both in terms of artistic style and patronage, since Abbess della Torre also substantially restored the adjacent Benedictine nunnery church of San Giovanni delle Valle in this period.<sup>47</sup> The first two stalls on the north range display dense relief carving on the stall-backs, dividers and canopies. On the stall-backs, dragons and other creatures gambol amongst rich foliage, and the canopy is decorated with six-pointed stars of different woods containing flowers.<sup>48</sup> Bed canopies and ceilings of the period were commonly decorated with wooden stars within square grids, as documented in contemporary painting.<sup>49</sup>

The lateral stalls at Cividale show close parallels with the San Fermo roof (Fig. 25). Conceived as rows of horizontal friezes, swathes of leaves containing roundels of carved stars appear above each pair of pilasters. In the San Fermo roof, arches containing painted busts of saints were also supported by similar double pilasters. In Cividale, above nailhead mouldings, the curved canopy was divided into squares by square billet mouldings terminated by anthemions and painted ogee arches. The final canopy section is supported by carved brackets, which correspond almost exactly to those on the San Fermo roof brackets (Fig. 26). In technique and aesthetic appeal, the Cividale stalls were clearly influenced by similar decorative forms used in roof construction.

<sup>46</sup>This coat-of-arms can be seen on stall N1, in the centre of the carved stall back, and shows an eagle with outstretched wings. Grion suggested that it should be attributed to abbess Speronella de Portis (1421–48). Giusto Grion, *Guida storica di Cividale e del suo distretto* (Cividale: Feliciano Strazzolini, 1899), p. 371. Giovanni Maria Del Basso, 'Gli stalli del Tempietto Longobardo di Cividale', *Quaderni del FACE* 23 (1963), pp. 15–17.

<sup>47</sup>An inscription over the door of the church indicates that it was restored under Margarita della Torre in 1371. Grion (1899), p. 380.

<sup>48</sup>Relief carving depicting birds and foliage in a similar playful way featured on the stalls in Santa Chiara in Naples, which were destroyed in 1943. P. B. Carcano di Varese, *Guida della monumentale chiesa di S. Chiara in Napoli* (Milan: La Zingografica, 1913), fig. 16.

<sup>49</sup>For example, see the bed in the fresco of the Birth of the Virgin by Bartoldo di Fredi in San Gimignano in Siena, dated to 1360/1390 and the panel painting by Gregorio di Cecco di Luca also of the Birth of the Virgin, dated to around 1410 in the Pinacoteca Vaticana. Katja Kwastek, *Camera. Gemalter und realer Raum der italienischen Frührenaissance* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2001), p. 123 (Fig. 79c), p. 182 (Fig. 121). Three-dimensional six-pointed stars within a grid framework can be seen on a fifteenth-century ceiling from Valle d'Aosta, now in the Museo Civico in Turin. Luigi Mallé, *Mobili e arredi lignei. Arazzi e bozzetti per arazzi. Catalogo* (Turin: Museo Civico di Torino, 1972), p. 49, Fig. 25.

Contemporary paintings provide further indications of fourteenth-century church furniture design. In Guariento's fresco of the *Investiture of St Augustine* in the *cappella maggiore* of the Eremitani church in Padua roughly dated to the mid-fourteenth century, a continuous coved canopy appears behind the singing friars, similar to stall canopies in San Domenico in Ferrara (Fig. 27).<sup>50</sup> Limited examples of fourteenth-century stalls restrict the scope of a consistent stylistic overview, but certain themes emerge. Foliate carving, Gothic detailing and coved canopies dominated designs, showing similar decorative techniques to church roofs. The same technique was also used for bed canopies, as illustrated in the fresco of the *Birth of John the Baptist* by Giusto de' Menabuoi in the Padua Baptistery, dated to 1375–78 (Fig. 28).<sup>51</sup> The curved bed canopy is divided into squares and topped by a cornice decorated with incised quatrefoils.

The use of similar techniques for stall canopies and roofs enabled striking artistic integrations, most notably in San Fermo in Verona. Such aesthetic harmony between furniture and ceilings was also achieved in the domestic setting, seen for example in a miniature of the *Birth of the Virgin* by Giovanni dei Grassi, in which the bed canopy and curved roof are of indistinguishable design.<sup>52</sup> Interactions between domestic and church furniture continued into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, showing that craftsmen continued to employ the same techniques and motifs on diverse projects.

### 1.3 Fifteenth-Century Gothic stalls

In the fifteenth century, the Gothic style was developed further. As in Italian Gothic architecture, stalls did not display complicated structural forms but rather appropriated certain Gothic motifs, such as tracery, gables and pinnacles.<sup>53</sup> Despite the crossover

<sup>50</sup>Louise Bourdua noted that the frescoes have been dated as early as 1338 and as late as the 1360s, and concluded that the iconography supports a dating between 1334 and 1368. Louise Bourdua, 'De origine et progressu ordinis fratrum heremitarum: Guariento and the Eremitani in Padua', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 66 (1998), p. 192. For an image, see Sergio Bettini and Lionello Puppi, *La chiesa degli Eremitani di Padova* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1970), p. 37, plate 47.

<sup>51</sup>Dating of frescoes taken from Sergio Bettini, *Le pitture di Giusto de' Menabuoi nel Battistero del Duomo di Padova* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1960), p. 34.

<sup>52</sup>Dated to c. 1388–95, in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence. Image in Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 59, fig. 64.

<sup>53</sup>Frankl concluded that in the architectural sphere '[t]he Italians amalgamated elements of the Gothic style with elements of their own native traditions, tending all the time to make it less Gothic.' Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, Revised by Paul Crossley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 209.

of Gothic and Renaissance styles, stalls in northern Italy are classed here as Gothic if they used these recognisable motifs. However, no extant Italian stalls display the complex architectural superstructures achieved in, for example, English stalls.<sup>54</sup> In Italy, the Gothic style persisted late into the century amid the growing popularity of intarsia stalls, showing that diverse artistic sensibilities coexisted in the region. This plurality of styles has led to fifteenth-century Gothic stalls being generally overlooked in favour of intarsia furniture. However, Gothic stalls can be particularly sophisticated, and show an increasing engagement with architectural principles compared to previous periods. The San Domenico stalls employed Gothic motifs only as decorative elements, whereas later stalls were conceived as complete architectural entities.

Fifteenth-century Gothic stalls fall into two stylistic groups: stalls topped by continuous coved or angled canopies and decorated cornices; and those with individual three-dimensional canopies over each stall. The first set derived from wooden coved canopies, whereas the second developed from earlier stone examples, seen for instance in the Arena Chapel in Padua. Elsewhere in Italy, the poor survival rate of early examples thwarts attempts at a full stylistic history. Fragments of a mid-fourteenth-century niche canopy from Orvieto Cathedral, however, display trefoil arches topped by traceried gables and crocketed spires, similar in spirit to the stone canopies in Padua.<sup>55</sup> Individual Gothic canopies in northern Italy were also influenced by German designs of the previous century, for instance the stall canopies in Hildesheim Cathedral, dated to 1380.<sup>56</sup> In these stalls, between pinnacles, flat openwork arches appear beneath crocketed gables, which contain carved roundels of saints (Fig. 29). In northern Italy, the two basic designs did not follow a chronological progression but existed simultaneously up to the 1480s.

A ‘missing link’ between the fourteenth-century stalls of San Domenico in Ferrara and fifteenth-century Gothic work is the workshop of Arduino and Alberto Da Baiso. Unfortunately no furniture made by the workshop is extant, but surviving documents attest to its success and popularity.<sup>57</sup> Amongst their work, which included domestic furniture

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<sup>54</sup>See for example, stalls from the 1370s in Lincoln Cathedral.

<sup>55</sup>Dated between 1329 and 1379. See Annarosa Garzelli, *Museo di Orvieto. Museo dell’Opera del Duomo* (Bologna: Calderini, 1972), p. 55, cat. 130.

<sup>56</sup>See Rudolf Busch, *Deutsches Chorgestühl in sechs Jahrhunderten* (Hildesheim and Leipzig: August Lax, 1928), p. 57. fig. 13.

<sup>57</sup>Bagatin notes that Tommasino Da Basio completed sacristy cupboards for San Bartolo in Ferrara in 1390 and the choir of the Servi in Ferrara 1405–06. Arduino da Baiso made a lectern for Ferrara Cathedral

and *studioli*, they constructed stalls in the Santa Trinità sacristy in Florence in 1420, in Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice in 1422, and in San Francesco in Ferrara in 1428 (with a second contract in 1431).<sup>58</sup> From the documentary evidence we know that the Da Baiso style incorporated intarsia patterns, tracery, architectural detailing and figural carving.

The earliest surviving fifteenth-century choir in northern Italy is in San Vittore in Bologna, completed between 1424 and 1426 by Pellegrino degli Anselmi from Bologna and Piero di Antonio di Firenze (Fig. 30).<sup>59</sup> Little known amongst art historians, it was described in a guidebook to the church in 1917 and has not featured in any subsequent publications. In a simple design, stall-backs display blind Gothic tracery of semi-circular arches subdivided by Y-tracery with two acute cusped sub-arches. The placement of carved stops between the sub-arches corresponds to horizontal mouldings on the stall-dividers, showing an understanding of the logical principles of Gothic architecture. Coved canopies reminiscent of fourteenth-century work do not feature at San Vittore, where canopies were formed of straight-angled panels topped by a layered cornice decorated with quatrefoils. Similar to the cornice frieze at San Domenico in Ferrara, this motif was closely related to contemporary metalwork.<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps the earliest extant examples in northern Italy of individual three-dimensional Gothic canopies above each stall are in Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna, dated to the mid-fifteenth century (Fig. 31).<sup>61</sup> On the stall-backs, cusped pointed arches with foliate spandrels echo foliate volutes on the stall-dividers. Abaci on the divider columns correspond

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in 1405, the Guinigi *studiolo* in 1413–14, work for the *studioli* of Belfiore and Belriguardo in the 1440s, and sacristy cupboards for Ferrara Cathedral in 1442–43. Bagatin (1991), pp. 14–42.

<sup>58</sup>The contract for the eleven carved and inlaid sacristy stalls in Santa Trinità in Florence is dated 4 January 1420 and transcribed in Gaetano Milanese, *Nuovi documenti per la storia dell'arte toscana dal XII al XVI secolo* (Florence: Dotti, 1901), pp. 75–77. The contract for the Venetian stalls is in ASV, Notai, busta 24, 70v–71r, an extract of which was published in Pietro Paoletti, *Raccolta di documenti inediti per servire alla storia della pittura veneziana nei secoli XV e XVI*, vol. 2 (Padua: R. Stabilimento P. Prosperini, 1895), p. 14n. They also worked in San Petronio and Santa Brigida in Bologna. Bandera Gregori (1972), p. 6. Bagatin (1991), pp. 14–19.

<sup>59</sup>Dated 11 April 1424. The church was under the auspices of the canons of San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna. Guido Zucchini, *La chiesa e il chiostro di San Vittore presso Bologna* (Bologna: Licinio Cappelli, 1917), p. 25.

<sup>60</sup>For example, a quatrefoil frieze on the base of the reliquary of San Vincenzo in the church of Santa Corona in Vicenza, dated to the first decades of the fifteenth century. Anna Maria Spiazzi, ed., *Oreficeria sacra in Veneto. Volume primo, secoli VI–XV* (Cittadella: Biblos Edizioni, 2004), 107–08, cat. 24.

<sup>61</sup>From the *Campione Universale*, quoted in Igino Benvenuto Supino, *L'arte nelle chiese di Bologna. Vol. II Secoli XV–XVI* (Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1990), p. 377: 'Nel 1453 in circa furono fatte le prospere [stalls] dal Cardinale Bessarione, ma solo quelle dei pp. sacerdoti, e che poscia nel 1517 vi furono aggiunte le seconde. [...] L'altare dei santi Eraclito e Sigismondo, anticamente fu d'un certo Bartolomeo Tossignani che fabbricò le prospere del coro l'anno 1450'.



to horizontal mouldings on the stall-back tracery, creating a pleasing logical design. The canopies repeat the cusped pointed arch motif from the stall-backs, while simple barrel vaults projecting forward create three-dimensionality (Fig. 32). Crocketed gables topped with finials appear between pinnacles decorated with miniaturised crockets.

Choir stalls in Reggio Emilia Cathedral are dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, and may be contemporaneous with the lectern, dated to 1459 (Fig. 33).<sup>62</sup> The traceried stall-backs are close reproductions of the San Vittore design, with additional cusping, traceried roses and geometric intarsia *a toppo* patterns below. Intarsia strips were also used in the Gothic stalls of Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna and Piacenza Cathedral, adding colour and pattern to the architectural ensembles. At Reggio Emilia, tracery stops align horizontally to mouldings at the edge of the stall-back and abaci of engaged columns of the stall-dividers. Between pinnacles, shell-niche canopies are topped by crocketed gables filled with openwork tracery. This alignment of vertical and horizontal elements shows an awareness of Gothic architectural principles, in which disparate elements are visually linked via linear devices such as mouldings and shafts. Almost identical stalls were depicted in the scene of *Pope Innocent IV naming St Peter Martyr as Inquisitor* in the fifteenth-century *St Peter Martyr altarpiece* by the workshop of Cerchia di Agnolo and Bartolomeo degli Erri in the Galleria Nazionale in Parma (Fig. 34).<sup>63</sup> The painted stalls display traceried stall-backs below crocketed gables containing traceried oculi. As the panel was painted for the church of San Domenico in Modena (near Reggio Emilia) the artists could have been influenced by the cathedral stalls or other lost stalls, indicating that the Gothic style was originally more widespread.

A more decorative combination of carved foliage and Gothic detailing was developed in the stalls of San Zeno in Verona, dated to the 1460s (Fig. 35).<sup>64</sup> The stall-backs display

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<sup>62</sup>Ciambecchini ascribes the stalls to the school of Giovanni da Baiso and dates them to the second half of the fifteenth century, except the central stalls which were completed by Nicola Sampolo and Giacomo Melara in 1505 when the choir was moved to the apse. Franco Ciambecchini, *La Cattedrale di Reggio Emilia. Arte e Storia* (Reggio Emilia: Gianni Bizzocchi Editore, 1998), p. 18 An inscription on the lectern reads: 'DE FLORDIBELLIS FIGERE FECIT OPUS MCCCCLIX'.

<sup>63</sup>Lucia Fornari Schianchi, ed., *Galleria Nazionale di Parma. Catalogo delle opere dall'Antico al Cinquecento* (Milan: Cassa di Risparmio di Parma e Piacenza, 1997), p. 101, cat. 95.

<sup>64</sup>The choir was unfinished at the death of Abbot Correr, and in his will of 29 November 1464 he instructed his descendants to finish the choir in the form in which it had been started: 'legando etiam et mandando quod chorus dicte ecclesie Sancti Zenonis compleatur et perficiatur eis in modo et forma prout inceptus est, et hoc de bonis et hereditate sua'. Alessandro Da Lisca, *La basilica di S. Zenone in Verona* (Verona: Don Bosco, 1941), p. 141. Text of will transcribed in Lionello Puppi, *Il trittico di Andrea Mantegna per la Basilica di San Zeno Maggiore in Verona* (Verona: Centro per la formazione professionale grafica,

cusped trefoil designs with curvilinear tracery in the spandrels, while the stall-dividers alternate between two forms of conventionalised foliate designs. The more complex, rippled design was clearly influenced by German furniture, seen for example in the fifteenth-century stalls of Halberstadt Cathedral (Fig. 36).<sup>65</sup> Similar leaf designs appeared in portable German model books such as Hans Böblinger's masterly publication, which diffused designs across Europe to artists of all media (Fig. 37).<sup>66</sup> In the San Zeno stall-dividers, lifelike vegetal forms of twisted, budding stems invite the viewer to contemplate concepts of naturalism by depicting natural wooden forms in the same material. In the cornice frieze, Gothic and natural forms are further synthesised in architectural crenellations filled with carved flowers and leaves.

Choir stalls in Piacenza Cathedral were constructed between 1466 and 1471,<sup>67</sup> although the canopies were replaced in the restoration completed around 1900, when the number of seats was also reduced (Fig. 38).<sup>68</sup> The stalls were originally topped by Gothic canopies, replaced by a classical cornice when the choir was removed behind the altar in 1600.<sup>69</sup> Lozenge frames on the stall-backs closely replicate fourteenth-century examples in San Domenico in Ferrara, demonstrating that Gothic designs remained relatively constant. The lozenges contain a variety of highly inventive tracery designs, displaying an impressive vocabulary of mathematical forms. The polychromy behind the tracery is probably the result of later interventions, which presumably reproduced the original decoration.

In Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, choir stalls from the early 1470s display Gothic designs

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1972), pp. 73–75. The choir was composed of two ranges of upper stalls now in the *cappella maggiore*, and two substall ranges in the crypt, which were located in the south nave aisle (together with the contemporary lectern) as recently as 1953. Ederle (1953), pp. 10–11.

<sup>65</sup>See Busch (1928), p. 55, fig. 32.

<sup>66</sup>Bucher stated that Böblinger's pattern book was probably a required task of the final year of his apprenticeship, suggesting that many more collections existed. An inscription by the artist is dated 1435. François Bucher, *Architector. The Lodge Books and Sketchbooks of Medieval Architects*, vol. 1 (New York: Abaris, 1979), pp. 376, 380.

<sup>67</sup>Tagliaferri states that the stalls were contracted to Giovanni and Giacomo Genovesi di Bartolomeo in a document of 25 June 1466 (notary Franceschino Fariselli), now in the Archivio Capitolare. Luigi Tagliaferri, *Il Duomo di Piacenza. Storia, arte, costume* (Piacenza: Scuola artigiana del libro, 1964), p. 90.

<sup>68</sup>Restoration under G. B. Scalabrini 1894–1901. *Il Duomo di Piacenza (1122–1972) Atti del Convegno di studi storici in occasione dell'850 anniversario della fondazione della Cattedrale di Piacenza* (Piacenza: Stabilimento tipografico piacentino, 1975) (hereafter referred to as *Il Duomo di Piacenza* [1975]), p. 97. In the Visita Pastorale of 1620, 36 upper stalls and 26 substalls were recorded, reduced to 26 upper and 20 substalls in the modern restoration. Tagliaferri (1964), p. 90.

<sup>69</sup>Domenico Ponzini, *Il Duomo di Piacenza. Itinerario Storico-Artistico* (Piacenza: Edizioni TEP, 1988), p. 58. The choir cornice features in an engraving in *Il Duomo di Piacenza. Studi e proposte* (Piacenza: Marchesotti e Luigi Porta, 1895) (hereafter referred to as *Il Duomo di Piacenza* [1895]), plate 6.

closely allied with French furniture (Fig. 39).<sup>70</sup> On the stall-backs, stylised reliefs show a variety of different tree species accompanied by animals and labourers, while carved scenes of the life of St Ambrose decorate the terminal stall-ends (Fig. 6). The depiction of tree species in woodcarving was almost a meditation on the woodworkers' craft, showing a similar mentality to the depiction of naturalised branches in San Zeno in Verona. The idea was further developed in the choir of San Francesco in Pavia, commissioned in 1484 as a close copy of Sant'Ambrogio.<sup>71</sup> In Pavia, only the stall-backs remain, some depicting stylised trees accompanied by human and animal figures, and others displaying ornamental vases and fountains (Fig. 40).<sup>72</sup>

In Sant'Ambrogio, the abbot's stall is crowned by a three-dimensional canopy, in accordance with a contractual obligation to distinguish this seat with additional decoration (Fig. 41).<sup>73</sup> Gothic tracery and busts of saints in roundels appear on the sides of the canopy, while the central spire is topped with a statue of St Ambrose. Above the non-major stalls, an angled canopy is surmounted by a carved cornice featuring portraits of saints surrounded by stylised foliage. Above the cornice, statues of angels holding shields, scrolls, books or musical instruments are positioned above each stall-divider, displaying a variety of gestures and attributes (Fig. 42). A brattished frieze runs along the top, a motif common in contemporary goldsmith work.<sup>74</sup>

A more elaborate version of the San Vittore design, the choir of the Clarissan convent of Corpus Domini in Bologna is dated to the late 1470s (Fig. 43).<sup>75</sup> On the stall-backs, two cusped sub-arches with traceried roses in the spandrels appear above intarsia designs (Fig.

<sup>70</sup>The contract for the new stalls between the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio and the craftsmen Lorenzo da Origgio, Giacomo da Torre and Giacomo del Maino is dated 16 October 1469, transcribed in Gerolamo Biscaro, 'Note e documenti santambrosiani. Seconda serie', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 4th series 3, no. 32 (1905), pp. 92–94.

<sup>71</sup>The contract with the brothers Gianpietro and Gianambrogio de Donati is dated 24 January 1484, transcribed in Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, pp. 288–89.

<sup>72</sup>A complete description of the stall-backs is given in Diego Sant'Ambrogio, 'Il coro di San Francesco Grande di Pavia del 1484 dei fratelli Giov. Pietro e Giov. Ambrogio de Donati di Milano', *Rivista di scienze storiche. Società cattolica per gli studi scientifici* 4, no. 5 (1907), pp. 322–23. The panels are situated around three walls of the *cappella maggiore*, while smaller panels which might have originally formed part of the choir, decorate a central bench.

<sup>73</sup>In the contract, the stall is referred to as the 'cathedra', and the craftsmen were instructed to carve an Annunciation on the stall-back. The design was later changed to incorporate a canopy, and the stall-back contains a carved relief of a tree, similar to the other stalls. Biscaro (1905), pp. 92–93.

<sup>74</sup>See for example the reliquary of a bone of St Sebastian from Padua Cathedral, dated to the first decade of the fifteenth century, in the style of Alessandro da Parma. Spiazzi (2004), 112–13, cat. 31.

<sup>75</sup>The façade of the new church was commissioned in 1478, and the church must have been finished in 1481 when a *sagrato* was documented. Supino (1990), pp. 355–56, Alfonso Rubbiani, 'La facciata della "Santa" in Bologna', *Rassegna d'Arte* 5, no. 10 (1905).

44).<sup>76</sup> As in San Vittore, openwork tracery forms the four terminal stall-ends, although at Corpus Domini more elaborate designs feature multifoiled lancets and curvilinear roses. Complex architectural forms were carved in the stall standard quadrants, where enlarged pointed abaci were replicated to form two further cusps. Above a continuous canopy at right angles to the stall-backs, the carved cornice is embellished with curvilinear tracery on the north side, and five-petalled roses on the south.

Gothic tracery and architectural detailing also features on the stalls of the Vallombrosan abbey church of San Lanfranco in Pavia, dated to before 1480 (Fig. 45).<sup>77</sup> On the stall-backs, the capitals and bases of engaged columns align with columns on the stall-dividers, which turn into volutes of carved foliage above. The S1 stall-back displays inventive curvilinear tracery, while the remaining stall-backs have simple carvings of round arches with trefoil cusping and tracery in the spandrels. The elaborate Flamboyant tracery on stall S1 shows influence from contemporary French furniture and architecture. For example, a wooden chapel screen from Laon Cathedral, dated to the last quarter of the fifteenth century, contains strikingly similar Flamboyant openwork tracery panels (Fig. 46).<sup>78</sup> French influence on furniture in Milan and Pavia derived both from their closer proximity to France and the increasing French political interest in Lombardy.

In addition to their use on stall-backs, tracery panels also decorated lecterns and sacristy cupboards. Small square tracery panels with polychrome backgrounds, which were probably mass-produced, adorned the lectern of the Brescian cathedral known as ‘Duomo Nuovo’<sup>79</sup> and the sacristy cupboards of San Francesco in Brescia (Fig. 47).<sup>80</sup> In Santa Giustina in Padua, the lectern of the *Coro Vecchio* is decorated with tracery panels,

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<sup>76</sup>Intarsia designs only appear on the two dignitary’s stalls at the west end; on the north side an IHS monogram with rays of light, and on the south side a chalice and host in a circular frame. On the remaining stalls these designs have been repeated in paint, presumably the result of a later intervention.

<sup>77</sup>The first stall on the right has the inscription ‘LUCAS’ referring to the abbot Luca Zanachi, who was killed in 1480. Opposite, the first stall on the left has a defaced coat of arms, which could be that of the marchese Pietro Pallavicini, who took control of the goods of the monastery after 1480. Ettore Facioli, *L’arca di S. Lanfranco di G. A. Amadeo nell’abside della basilica di S. Lanfranco ad occidente della città di Pavia* (Pavia: Ponzio, 1933), pp. 9–10. Chiara Frigerio, *Le Chiese di Pavia. San Lanfranco* (Pavia: Ufficio Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici della Diocesi di Pavia, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>78</sup>I am very grateful to Charles Tracy for suggesting this example. Laurence Fligny, *Le Mobilier en Picardie 1200–1700* (Paris: Picard, 1990), p. 50.

<sup>79</sup>Morassi has dated the lectern, which used to be situated in the Duomo Vecchio, or Rotunda, to the first half of the fifteenth century. Antonio Morassi, ed., *Catalogo delle cose d’arte e di antichità d’Italia. Brescia* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1939), p. 182.

<sup>80</sup>The cupboards were constructed in 1463 under Priore Sanson. Morassi (1939), p. 266.

some of which are exact replications of the Piacenza Cathedral stall-backs.<sup>81</sup> Fifteenth-century woodworkers successfully integrated tracery and intarsia, both on stall-backs as we shall see in San Colombano in Bobbio in the 1480s, or in the installation of a traceried lectern and intarsia stalls en suite as in Padua. Tracery panels were also used on *cassoni*, showing that the technique was not limited to the ecclesiastical sphere.<sup>82</sup> Fifteenth-century traceried furniture has been attributed to the Canozi workshop, but their documented output focussed more on intarsia panels than Gothic detailing.<sup>83</sup> Conversely, my research shows that a plurality of intarsia and Gothic designs were produced concurrently by a large network of woodworkers.

A geographical subset of fifteenth-century Gothic stalls was produced in Venice and the Venetian territories in Dalmatia. These will be considered in greater depth in case studies of Cozzi stalls in San Zaccaria (Chapter Five) and the Frari in Venice (Chapter Six), but their main characteristics can be indicated here. Dalmatian stalls in the cathedrals of Trogir, Rab and Zadar display carved stall-backs and distinctive concave gable canopies enclosing traceried bosses, which are fixed to a wooden backing.<sup>84</sup> Venetian craftsmen travelled to Dalmatia to construct stalls and other church furniture: for example, Matteo Moronzzone left Venice to construct the choir in Zadar Cathedral in 1418.<sup>85</sup> Stalls in the Augustinian Hermits church of Santo Stefano in Venice dated to the 1480s share certain characteristics with these earlier Dalmatian stalls, such as the lozenge-shaped frames on the stall-backs and painted stars on the wooden backing, demonstrating how motifs were diffused throughout the Venetian territories (Fig. 48). The authorship of the Santo Stefano stalls has recently been questioned, but it is clear that the workshop also travelled as far

<sup>81</sup>A tracery panel of interlocking circles can be seen in the Paduan lectern (south face, bottom left) and in stall 17 in Piacenza Cathedral.

<sup>82</sup>Two examples of fifteenth-century traceried *cassoni* are in the Schloss-Museum in Berlin and the Castiglioni collection in Vienna, illustrated in Frida Schottmüller, *Wohnungskultur und Möbel der Italienischen Renaissance*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffman, 1928), p. 39, fig. 86. and p. 48, fig. 107.

<sup>83</sup>For instance, both the tracery bench now in the Frari in Venice and the cupboard formerly in a synagogue in Modena have been attributed to the Canozi da Lendinara. Giuseppe Fiocco, 'Lorenzo e Cristoforo da Lendinara e la loro Scuola', *L'Arte* (1913), p. 277. Bagatin (2004), p. 69.

<sup>84</sup>The Trogir Cathedral choir was commissioned to Master Ivan Budislavić in 1439. Ivo Babić, ed., *Trogir's Cultural Treasure* (Zagreb: Tourist Alliance of the Commune of Trogir and Turistkomerc, 1990), p. 60. The choir in Rab Cathedral dates to 1445, and Domijan ascribed it to Matteo Moronzon on stylistic evidence, but Petricioli argued that the carving was too poor quality to attribute it to Moronzon. Miljenko Domijan, *La cattedrale di Santa Maria Maggiore di Arbe* (Split: Muzej hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika, 2005), pp. 21–22. Petricioli (1972), p. 70.

<sup>85</sup>Matteo Moronzzone completed the choir of Zadar Cathedral between 1418 and 1451. See Petricioli (1972), pp. 38–53. Ivo Petricioli, 'Matteo Moronzzone a Zara', *Arte Veneta* 29 (1975), pp. 113–118. In the choir contract dated 23 July 1418 he was specified as being 'civis venetus'. Petricioli (1972), p. 121.

inland as Parma, illustrated by almost identical fragments of fifteenth-century furniture panels from San Paolo (Fig. 49).<sup>86</sup> This Parma example, which has rarely been noted in relation to the Santo Stefano stalls, shows that the Venetian style was not restricted to a political area, and further illustrates the plurality of furniture styles developed in the fifteenth century.<sup>87</sup>

## 1.4 Intarsia Choir Stalls c. 1460 to 1520

The intarsia technique has obscure origins. Wilmering has shown that the technique was certainly practiced in the Islamic world, but the date of its introduction to Italy is unknown.<sup>88</sup> The fact that few examples survive from the fourteenth century give the perhaps misleading impression that intarsia was pioneered in central Italy, although lack of evidence means that this cannot be substantiated. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, intarsia narrative and figural scenes were developed in Orvieto and Siena. The highly decorative choir in Orvieto Cathedral with its stalls, cathedra, lectern and tympanum was begun in 1329–30, but work continued for over a century and was largely completed by Siennese *intarsiatori*.<sup>89</sup> On the cathedra and lectern, portraits of saints were completed in a graphic style, with dark outlines and flat backgrounds containing geometric designs and inscriptions identifying each saint.<sup>90</sup> The *Coronation of the Virgin*, inlaid on the tympanum above the entrance to the choir, was testament to how intarsia could convey both a sumptuous effect of patterns and fabrics, and a feeling of space (Fig. 50).

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<sup>86</sup>Traditionally the Santo Stefano stalls have been attributed to the Cozzi workshop, due to an inscription on the stalls which reads ‘OP. MAGI. MACI. DE./ VICETIA. MCCCCLXXXVIII/ ADI 25 OTB’. However, in a legal dispute dated 27 February 1481, the woodcarver Leonardo Scalamanzo was named as responsible for the stalls. Based on an examination of documentation and style, Schulz concluded that ‘it is only logical to assume that Scalamanzo made them and that the contribution of the anonymous master Marco was slight’. Markham Schulz (2008), p. 662.

<sup>87</sup>A throne from the abbess’ ‘alcove’ (called ‘alcova’ by the author Luisa Bandera Gregori) in the convent of San Paolo, currently in the Galleria Nazionale in Parma, is composed of a panel identical to the stall-backs in Santo Stefano, with arms displaying similar openwork carving. Luisa Bandera Gregori dated the throne to the first half of the sixteenth century, but given its stylistic links with Santo Stefano, it could be earlier. Bandera Gregori (1972), p. 60, fig. 40. Alberici briefly noted the similarity of the two sets of panels. Clelia Alberici, *Il Mobile Veneto* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980), p. 14.

<sup>88</sup>Wilmering (1999), pp. 65–66.

<sup>89</sup>Wilmering conceded that the dating of the intarsias was difficult, suggesting that they could have been designed around the start of the project but made later. Wilmering (1999), pp. 81–86.

<sup>90</sup>In the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo in Orvieto, intarsia panels of saints include saints Martin, Stephen, Peter and Ippolitus. Saints Stephen and Laurence appeared on the sides of the triangular lectern desk. Garzelli (1972), pp. 50–54, cat. 108–111, 126–27.

In 1415–1428, Domenico di Niccolò dei Cori and Mattia di Nanni produced stalls for the Cappella de' Signori in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, where figurative intarsia was further developed.<sup>91</sup> In the *Creation of the World*, an increasingly varied selection of woods was used, and green putty created a naturalistic earth (Fig. 51). Some craftsmen of this early period rejected the figurative intarsia style in favour of the simpler intarsia *a toppo* style. The choir of San Domenico in Città di Castello is signed and dated 'opus manni de florentia 1435' and was composed of *a toppo* designs.<sup>92</sup>

The earliest extant perspective intarsia panels are on the north and south walls of the *Sagrestia delle Messe* in Florence Cathedral, produced by Agnolo di Lazzaro, Antonio Manetti and their collaborators between 1436 and 1445.<sup>93</sup> They created panels showing cupboards filled with books and liturgical items, using a new technique of inlaid wood to create effects of light and space (Fig. 52).<sup>94</sup> Theories abound as to the origin of this spectacular advance in both iconography and technique, centering on the method of artificial perspective formulated by Brunelleschi, who also worked at the cathedral in this period.<sup>95</sup> However, perhaps due to the privacy of the Florentine sacristy, the technique did not have an immediate impact and made its first convincing appearance in stalls in the 1460s, in Modena Cathedral. Given the quality of the Florentine sacristy, how and why did the geographical focus shift north? Some scholars have suggested the possible mediation of Piero della Francesca, who may have been acquainted with the Canozi da Lendinara brothers. This idea originated in 1509 with Luca Pacioli's assertion that Lorenzo Canozi was friends with Piero, and is supported by anecdotal evidence that Piero was in Ferrara

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<sup>91</sup>The presence of Mattia di Nanni can be seen in the left stalls (the author did not specify north or south), dateable to after 1421. Antoine Wilmering, 'Domenico di Niccolò, Mattia di Nanni and the development of Sienese intarsia techniques', *The Burlington Magazine* 139, no. 1131 (May 1997), p. 392. Domenico worked on choirs in the chapels of Sant'Ansano, San Salvino and possibly San Vittorio in the cathedral, all now lost. Wilmering (1999), p. 86.

<sup>92</sup>Some panels are conserved in the Pinacoteca of Città di Castello. Wilmering (1999), p. 96.

<sup>93</sup>From an analysis of documentation, Haines deduced that Agnolo di Lazzaro and collaborators worked on the south wall intarsias between 1436 and 1440, and Antonio Manetti and collaborators worked on the north wall between 1436 and 1445. Margaret Haines, *The "Sagrestia delle Messe" of the Florentine Cathedral* (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1983), pp. 66–68. Ferretti noted that this was contemporary with the publication of Alberti's *De Pittura*. Ferretti (1982), p. 467.

<sup>94</sup>Haines noted that not only was the iconography novel, but that the technique of inlaying pictures starting from the largest pieces down to the smallest, was also a new advance. Haines (1983), p. 100.

<sup>95</sup>Haines did not suggest that Brunelleschi himself supplied the intarsia cartoons, but that other artists such as Alberti, Giovanni di ser Giovanni called Scheggia (a painter and younger brother of Masaccio) and Uccello could have been associated with the project, concluding that 'it can probably be concluded in general terms that the ferment about perspective was the impetus behind the sudden appearance of illusionistic woodwork in the vestry of S. Maria del Fiore.' Haines (1983), p. 102.

in 1448–9 when the Canozzi worked on Leonello d’Este’s *studiolo* at Belfiore.<sup>96</sup> As with many artistic developments, various factors combined to create a stylistic advancement: the ability and flair of the artist and the opportunity for a large scale work commissioned by flexible patrons. Unfortunately without new evidence this issue will remain open to speculation.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, numerous choirs were constructed in northern Italy using intarsia techniques. Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozzi and their followers produced high quality perspective intarsia panels, but simpler—possibly prefabricated—panels were also produced by other workshops.<sup>97</sup> Non-representational designs were used in Canozzi choirs on seat-backs or substalls, but in the choirs by other workshops formed the main area of interest. A variety of styles were developed in this period and craftsmen travelled widely for work, diffusing designs across northern Italy.

The first extant figurative intarsia panels in northern Italy are in the choir of San Prospero in Reggio Emilia, dated to 1458 (panels from this old choir were reused to form seat-backs and substalls of the sixteenth-century choir). The San Prospero panels do not show a full grasp of Florentine developments, depicting animals, architecture, still lifes and furniture in empirical perspective on flat backgrounds. The choir has been attributed to Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozzi, but other scholars considered the rather naive panels hard to reconcile with the confidence of later Canozzi work.<sup>98</sup> Instead, they in fact exhibit closer stylistic affinities with stall-backs in San Petronio in Bologna, completed by Agostino de’

<sup>96</sup>Pacioli wrote in his *Divina Proportione*, published in Venice in 1509, on the art of perspective practiced by ‘Maestro Petro de’ franceschi dela qual già feci dignissimo compendio e per voi ben appreso. E del suo caro quanto fratello Maestro Lorenzo Canozo da Lendenara’. Quoted in Pier Luigi Bagatin, *L’Arte dei Canozzi Lendinaresi*, 2nd edition (1st edition 1987) (Trieste: Edizioni Lint Trieste, 1990), p. 30. Longhi strongly asserted the claim that Piero provided cartoons for the Canozzi woodworkers: ‘Nel caso dei Lendinara, che cosa d’inaudito in questa supposizione, che all’amico “a lui caro quanto fratello” Lorenzo Canozzi, Piero della Francesca abbia fornito una serie-base di cartoni, abbandonandoglieli con diritto di riproduzione illimitata?’ Roberto Longhi, *Officina Ferrarese* (Florence: Sansoni, 1956), p. 22. This idea was accepted by Arcangeli in Arcangeli (1942), p. 15, and by Graziano Manni, *I Signori della Prospettiva* (Mirandola: Cassa di Risparmio di Mirandola, 2001), p. 54.

<sup>97</sup>There is some debate as to how to refer to the Canozzi da Lendinara brothers. I will use the surname Canozzi, since it appears on Lorenzo’s tomb slab in the Chiostro della Magnolia in the Santo. Bagatin (2004), p. 66.

<sup>98</sup>The stalls at San Prospero in Reggio have been attributed to the Canozzi, but only circumstantially. Duke Borso d’Este, who employed amongst others Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozzi, wrote a letter to San Prospero, saying that he was keeping some woodworkers to work for him so they could not come and make the choir in Reggio. Elio Monducci, ‘Il coro ligneo della Basilica di S. Prospero in Reggio Emilia’, *Bollettino storico cremonese* 23 (1961), p. 246. Bagatin concluded that the Canozzi could produce such naive work, and then a few years later produce the sophisticated panels of Modena Cathedral. Pier Luigi Bagatin, ‘Le tarsie del coro ligneo di San Prospero’, in *La Basilica di San Prospero a Reggio Emilia*, ed. by Graziella Buccellati (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1997), p. 66. Bagatin (2004), p. 131.



Marchi da Crema in 1468–77. In Reggio Emilia, animals were portrayed in a flat, graphic style, illustrated by a leopard on the seat-back of stall eighteen (Fig. 53a). The curve of the leopard's tail is very similar to two lions in a San Petronio panel, as both are portrayed in an almost arabesque linear style (Fig. 53b). Further details, such as the unsuccessful linear perspective of the stage-like space, suggest that the intarsia panels at San Prospero and San Petronio could even have been made by the same artist.<sup>99</sup> The Bolognese panels show an increased confidence consistent with their later dating.

Perspective intarsia was further developed in the early 1460s, when Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozzi were commissioned to construct the choir in Modena Cathedral.<sup>100</sup> The Canozzi brothers had previously worked on the studiolo in the d'Este palace at Belfiore together with Arduino da Baiso, showing that Canozzi work developed from Gothic models.<sup>101</sup> At Modena, structural elements of the stalls, such as the canopies, were subordinated by the presence of large intarsia panels depicting architectural scenes and cupboards full of liturgical objects (Fig. 54). Conceived horizontally, the overall design is flat and squat. This formula of large perspectival panels combined with little carving or three-dimensionality was further developed by the Canozzi brothers, both together and separately. The choir in the Santo in Padua was commissioned to both brothers in 1462, while Cristoforo's name appears first in the Modena inscription. Although they both worked concurrently on the two choirs, Cristoforo took more responsibility at Modena and Lorenzo at Padua.<sup>102</sup> Only two intarsia fragments of the Santo choir remain, which scholars have generally considered inferior to the refined Modena panels.<sup>103</sup> In 1469, the Parma Cathedral choir was given solely to Cristoforo as a close remodelling of the Modena furniture, and the extant stalls show that this obligation was fulfilled (Fig. 55).<sup>104</sup> Later

<sup>99</sup>This similarity has not been noted by other scholars.

<sup>100</sup>No contract survives for the Modena Cathedral choir, but payments show that work had already been started by the summer of 1461. An inscription on stall S10 provides an end date of 1465: 'HOC OPUS FACTUM FUIT PER CHRISTOPHOREM ET LAURENTIUM FRATRES DE LENDENARIA 1465'. Bagatin (2004), p. 139.

<sup>101</sup>Manni asserted that the Canozzi brothers were apprentices of Arduino da Baiso in Ferrara. Manni (2001), p. 15. Bagatin agreed that this was highly likely, but that the first document which firmly placed Lorenzo and Cristoforo at Belfiore was dated 16 August 1449, in which they were called 'lovoranti de dito M.o Arduino'. Bagatin (2004), pp. 84, 106.

<sup>102</sup>Bagatin analysed the payments for both choirs, discovering that Cristoforo was more often present in Modena and Lorenzo in Padua. However, he expressed caution in ascribing the choirs to the separate brothers, given that each had a bed in each city. Bagatin (2004), pp. 252–57.

<sup>103</sup>Bagatin (2004), p. 216.

<sup>104</sup>The contract is dated 9 May 1469, and is transcribed in Giuseppe Fiocco, 'Lorenzo Canozzi e la sua scuola', *Il Santo* (1961), p. 339. An inscription on the stalls reads 'OPUS CRISTOFORI LENDENARII MIRI

Canozi intarsia work includes the crypt choir, sacristy and organ balcony in Modena;<sup>105</sup> the *Sagrestia dei Consorziali* in Parma Cathedral;<sup>106</sup> sacristy cupboards in Lucca Cathedral;<sup>107</sup> and the choir of Pisa Cathedral, which remained unfinished.<sup>108</sup>

In the innovative Modena Cathedral choir, the landscape-oriented rectangular panels emphasise the horizontal design of the choir as a whole. At Padua, the orientation of the rectangle was changed to portrait and the architectural superstructure of the choir was developed to include Gothic motifs such as tracery, twisted columns and gable canopies. A compromise square shape was used for intarsia panels at Parma, where the overall design returned to the horizontality of Modena. In the Modena crypt choir, portrait-oriented intarsia panels are framed by tracery and twisted columns and surmounted by shell-niche canopies, perhaps inspired by contemporary Cozzi work in Venice. Iconography did not vary greatly amongst their commissions and consisted of generic architectural scenes and cupboard still lifes, which will be discussed below. Some variety and progression can however be noted: still lifes in the Parma sacristy cupboards feature more objects than earlier versions in Modena and an unusual series of mechanical devices are depicted in the Pisa choir.<sup>109</sup>

Followers of the Canozi were numerous and included their relative Pier Antonio degli Abati, who made intarsia choirs in the Vicentine churches of Santa Corona, Monte Berico

ARTIFICIS MCCCCLXXIII'. Manni (2001), p. 139.

<sup>105</sup>On 22 December 1477, Cristoforo Canozi received 1148 lire from Modena Cathedral for work on the intarsia organ shutters, benches in the sacristy and the '*coro piccolo*' in the crypt. The large organ panels depict the four evangelists. Manni (2001), pp. 159–76, 187–92. Bagatin dates the Modena sacristy benches, which particularly focus on urban scenes, to 1471–77. Bagatin (2004), pp. 359–60. The choir in the crypt was badly damaged by fire in 1536–7. Less badly damaged were stalls with intarsia portraits of the four Doctors of the Church and shell-niche canopies, which were moved to the upper choir when it was reordered in 1597. Two of these portraits were subsequently removed: St Ambrose is in the sacristy, and St Gregory the Great was inserted into a bench for celebrants in the crypt. Orianna Baracchi, '*Il Lendinara e gli Artigiani del Legno in Duomo*', in *Il Duomo e la Torre di Modena; Nuovi documenti e ricerche*, ed. by Orianna Baracchi and Carlo Giovannini (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1988) (hereafter referred to as Baracchi, 1988<sup>2</sup>), p. 91.

<sup>106</sup>Cristoforo and his son Bernardino worked on benches and cupboards in the sacristy from 1487 to 1491. The benches have large intarsia panels on the backs depicting a variety of architectural scenes and an unusual image of a young man reading a book. After Cristoforo's death in 1490, Luchino Bianchino and other intarsia workers finished the project in the same style. Manni (2001), pp. 215–22. Bagatin (2004), pp. 428, 452.

<sup>107</sup>The Lucca sacristy cupboards were finished in 1488, and five panels are preserved in the Villa Guinigi museum. Bagatin (2004), p. 410.

<sup>108</sup>Cristoforo and his son Bernardino worked on the Pisa choir for a period between 1485 and 1488 but left the city before its completion. Four panels remain from the Pisa choir, two in the Museo del Duomo and two inserted in a bench in the cathedral. Bagatin (2004), p. 421. Manni (2001), pp. 209–13.

<sup>109</sup>Bagatin (2004), p. 423.

and San Bartolomeo and Sant'Andrea in Ferrara.<sup>110</sup> At Santa Corona, intarsia panels on the stall-backs are framed by polychrome arches rather than perspectival doors and show formulaic architectural and cupboard scenes, exploiting strong contrasts between light and dark woods (Fig. 56). Flattened shell-niches above the cornice are reminiscent of canopies on the crypt choir of Modena and lend an air of refined classicism to the ensemble. The choir of Santa Giustina in Padua, constructed by Domenico da Piacenza and Francesco da Parma in 1467–77 was probably closely influenced by the lost Canozi Santo choir (Fig. 57).<sup>111</sup> In Santa Giustina, a curved canopy is decorated with square intarsia *a toppo* panels, and stall-backs alternate between architectural scenes and still lifes. Iconography is less formulaic than in Canozi work, displaying some unusual scenes such as the *Sacrifice of Abraham* on stall S8 and an allegory of the monk's life on stall S4 (Fig. 58).

In the Cremona Cathedral choir, Giovanni Maria Platina followed the Canozi style and iconography, but again introduced more variety.<sup>112</sup> Completed between 1483 and 1490, stall-backs featured images of buildings including the cathedral itself, portraits of saints, and animals (Fig. 59). As at Santa Giustina, square intarsia *a toppo* panels appeared beneath the overhanging cornice. Canozi followers generally adopted portrait-oriented panels, compromising the horizontality of the Modena stalls with the vertical emphasis of earlier stalls. Rejecting fourteenth-century coved canopies, Canozi stalls tended towards flatness, adopting shallow overhanging cornices decorated with carved and intarsia friezes.

A second generation of the Canozi workshop continued the established technique and iconography. At Ferrara Cathedral, various woodworkers including Bernardino Canozi, son of Cristoforo, introduced a classical architectural vocabulary, including flattened shell-niche canopies and Corinthian column stall-dividers.<sup>113</sup> Although now badly damaged, the

<sup>110</sup>Pierantonio was commissioned to make intarsia panels for the choir in Monte Berico on 4 October 1484, of which four survive in sacristy cupboards. Aristide Dani, *Tarsie lignee di Pier Antonio dell'Abate da Modena per la chiesa di s. Maria di Monte Berico* (Vicenza 1965), p. 19. Stalls from Sant'Andrea in Ferrara are preserved in the Palazzo Schifanoia, and have been attributed to Pierantonio by Bagatin based on a stylistic comparison with panels in Monte Berico. Bagatin (1991), p. 98. Panels from the choir of San Bartolomeo in Vicenza were moved to Monte Berico in 1833 and can be attributed to Pierantonio on stylistic grounds. Manni (2001), p. 280.

<sup>111</sup>Manni (2001), p. 301. *I Benedettini a Padova e nel territorio padovano attraverso i secoli* (exhibition catalogue, Abbazia di Santa Giustina, Padua, October–December 1980), eds A. De Nicolo Salmazo and F. G. Trolese (Treviso: Edizioni Canova, 1980), p. 311, cat. 181.

<sup>112</sup>Puerari (1967). Luisa Bandera and Andrea Foglia, *Arte lignaria a Cremona* (Bergamo: Edizioni Bolis, 2000), pp. 47–51.

<sup>113</sup>The original contract, now lost, commissioned Bernardino Canozi and was dated 1501. In later documents, the woodworkers Pietro Richardo della Massa, Sebastiano Rigoni, Daniele Canozi, son of Bernardino were mentioned. Fiorella Frisoni, 'Il coro ligneo della Cattedrale di Ferrara', in *La Cattedrale di*

stall-backs depicted generic motifs alongside images with particular resonances for the Ferrarese religious community, such as the reliquary of the arm of San Maurelio (Fig. 60).<sup>114</sup>

The popularity of perspective intarsia led to Canozzi-style panels being inserted into stalls by different workshops. In San Giorgio fuori le Mura in Ferrara, perspective intarsia panels only decorate the two dignitaries' stalls, while the rest of the panels depict simple pertinent Olivetan symbols (Fig. 61).<sup>115</sup> Intarsia perspective panels also feature on two dignitaries' stalls in Sant'Anastasia in Verona, with the rest of the stall backs displaying linear designs.

Portraits of saints feature in some Canozzi work, but this iconography was developed further in the choir of the Certosa di Pavia (Fig. 62). At Modena Cathedral, the Canozzi workshop produced portraits of the four evangelists on an organ balcony, while at Parma, four figures of saints appear on the stall-backs.<sup>116</sup> These portraits depict saints in animated positions and their facial features have a rounded, plastic quality. At the Certosa di Pavia, the choir stalls were constructed by Bartolomeo de Poli da Modena, Pantaleone de Marchi da Cremona, Giacomo dei Crocefissi and Magistro Cristoforo de'Rocchi da Pavia roughly between 1487–97.<sup>117</sup> Portraits of saints occupy all forty-two stall-backs, with figures being portrayed in highly detailed costumes against expansive landscaped backgrounds. Employing minute wooden slivers to describe the details of hair and clothing, the Certosa figurative panels represent one of the pinnacles of the intarsia technique. The stalls are topped by semi-circular barrel-vault canopies and a carved and inlaid cornice, fully incorporating Renaissance design sensibilities.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Canozzi-style intarsia choir stalls remained popular.

*Ferrara. Atti del Convegno nazionale di studi storici organizzato dalla Accademia delle scienze di Ferrara sotto l'alto patrocinio della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 11-13 maggio 1979* (Ferrara: Belriguardo, 1982), pp. 539–41.

<sup>114</sup>Bagatin (1991), p. 81. Frisoni suggested that cartoons from the Canozzi workshop were reused at Ferrara. Frisoni (1982), p. 547.

<sup>115</sup>The choir has been identified as an early work of the Canozzi brothers by Bagatin. Bagatin (2004), pp. 119–20. Ferretti attributed the choir to the Olivetan monk Fra Sebastiano da Rovigno (called Schiavone) who also did the choir in Sant'Elena in Venice. Ferretti (1982), p. 534.

<sup>116</sup>In the Canozzi choir in the Santo in Padua, ten portraits of saints were mentioned in the contemporary description by Matteo Colazio, see B.1, p. 289.

<sup>117</sup>Luca Beltrami, *La Certosa di Pavia*, 3rd edition (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1924), pp. 77–79. Roberta Battaglia, 'La decorazione della Certosa pavese nei primi anni Novanta del Quattrocento: una linea bramantesca', *Annali di storia pavese*, no. 25 (December 1997), pp. 128–132. Hamilton Jackson reports that the choir was restored in 1847 when wax and coloured stucco were inserted to imitate missing pieces of wood. Francis Hamilton Jackson, *Intarsia and Marquetry* (London: Sands and Company, 1903), p. 35.

Stalls now in Santa Trinità in Parma were completed by Lucchino Bianchino in 1510 originally for the Benedictine nuns' church of San Paolo. The stall-backs show alternating views of cityscapes and liturgical cupboards, between Canozzi-style dividers incorporating both foliage carving and pilasters, topped by a simple cornice (Fig. 63).<sup>118</sup> Paolo Sacca employed a similar combination for the choir of San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna in the 1520s<sup>119</sup>, and likewise Biagio de Marchi da Crema for stalls in San Girolamo della Certosa in Bologna, completed in 1538.<sup>120</sup>

The Olivetan monk Fra Giovanni da Verona, one of the most famous intarsia workers of this period, completed choirs for Santa Maria in Organo in Verona, Monte Oliveto Maggiore, and the monastery of Villanova Sillaro, now in Lodi Cathedral.<sup>121</sup> Fra Giovanni reintroduced additional carving into the stall repertoire, dispensing with intarsia *a toppo* framing devices. At Santa Maria in Organo (1494–99), highly detailed and naturalistic perspective intarsia panels are framed by round walnut arches, decorated with carvings of grotesques and classical devices (Fig. 64). The overall design of the stalls retains the simplicity of the Canozzi style, in which almost completely flattened stall dividers support a shallow overhanging decorated cornice. Iconography of the intarsia panels became more complex, incorporating buildings with intricate architectural details, and cupboard interiors containing liturgical objects, musical instruments and scientific instruments.

As the technique advanced, imagined architectural fantasies were created in intarsia, seen for example in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma.<sup>122</sup> Scenes include centralised temples, ruins, and buildings with elaborate exterior decoration (Fig. 65). A similar set of architectural images occupies stall-backs in San Sisto in Piacenza, and upper stall-backs in San Prospero in Reggio Emilia.<sup>123</sup> In these three choirs, a large variety of buildings and

<sup>118</sup>In 1491, Bianchino had worked with Cristoforo Canozzi in the Sagrestia dei Consorziati in Parma Cathedral. The inscription on the choir of Santa Trinità, which was originally for the Benedictine nunnery of San Paolo in Parma, reads 'LUCHINUS BLANCHINUS PARMENS. IOANNA PLACENTIA ABB. MODERANTE MDX...' Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, 'Luchino Bianchino', *Critica d'Arte* (1962), pp. 39, 47.

<sup>119</sup>The date inscribed on the stalls is 1523, but the date of the last payment to Paolo Sacca is 1527. Gurrieri and Gurrieri (1985), p. 20.

<sup>120</sup>The first 22 stalls, 11 per side, are by Biagio de Marchi da Crema, with remaining stalls by Giambattista Natali in 1612. Angelo Raule, *La Certosa di Bologna* (Bologna: Arnaldo Nanni, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>121</sup>The choir of Monte Oliveto Maggiore was constructed from 1503–05, and some of the intarsia panels are now in Siena Cathedral. Bagatin (2000), pp. 88–93. The intarsia panels of Villanova Sillaro were executed by Fra Giovanni in 1522–25, and were moved to Lodi Cathedral in 1966. Monja Faraoni, *Le tarsie di fra Giovanni da Verona nel duomo di Lodi* (Lodi: Basilica Cattedrale di Lodi, 2004), pp. 13, 64.

<sup>122</sup>The choir stalls were commissioned to Marco Antonio Zucchi in 1512, but they were finished in 1538 by Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Testa. Ferretti (1982), pp. 544–45.

<sup>123</sup>Bartolomeo Spinelli da Busseto and Giovan Pietro Pambianchi da Colorno, were contracted in 1514 to

ruins are depicted, with cupboard scenes being relegated to seat-backs and substalls. Fra Raffaele da Brescia also created centralised views of classical buildings, seen in his stalls for San Michele in Bosco (1513–1521).<sup>124</sup> Fra Raffaele retained the cupboard interior motif for the main stall-backs, but introduced complex mathematical devices, a motif also used by Fra Giovanni in his panels for the sacristy of Santa Maria in Organo (Fig. 66).<sup>125</sup>

In this period, intarsia choir stalls were also produced featuring perspectival panels with much simpler designs and techniques, often in intarsia *a toppo*, contemporaneous with Canozzi intarsia work. Generally smaller in scale, they were composed of fewer woods and portrayed objects using unconvincing perspective in a shallow depth of field. Often placed in Gothic structures, their more amateur designs are similar to domestic furniture panels, demonstrating the broad use of similar iconographies.

Simple *a toppo* panels such as these are found in the substalls at Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Forming fragments of the choir constructed in 1470, they were incorporated into the new choir around 1510 after the building of the tribune.<sup>126</sup> The repeating design features generic castle-type buildings characterised by Gothic crenellations (Fig. 67). Almost identical panels decorate a *cassoni* now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, on which crenellated castles appear along the long sides.<sup>127</sup> The Milan and Los Angeles panels are stylistically close to *a toppo* stall-backs in the Frari in Venice and Santa Maria in Spilimbergo (currently housed in Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone), some of which also depict medieval buildings topped with crenellations. These two choirs were both completed by the Cozzi workshop, in 1468 and 1477 respectively, and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Six. The presence of such similar panels in the two geographical extremes of

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construct the choir of San Sisto in Piacenza, which was finished in 1524. Giovanni Spinelli, ed., *Monasteri benedettini in Emilia Romagna* (Milan: Silvana, 1980), p. 79. The choir of San Prospero in Reggio Emilia was constructed, using panels from the old fifteenth-century choir, by Cristoforo and Giuseppe de Venetiis da Cremona between 1544 and 1546. Monducci (1961), p. 239. Bagatin (1997), pp. 61–69.

<sup>124</sup>Parts of this choir are now in the Sacramento Chapel in San Petronio, Bologna. Manni (2001), vol. 2, pp. 355–362.

<sup>125</sup>The sacristy panels are dated 1519–23. Bagatin (2000), p. 171.

<sup>126</sup>Girolamo Gattico, *Descrizione succinta e vera delle cose spettanti alla chiesa e convento di Santa Maria delle Grazie e di Santa Maria della Rosa e suo luogo, et altre loro aderenze in Milano dell'Ordine de'Predicatori con due tavole in fine*, ed. by Elisabetta Erminia Bellagente (Milan: Ente Raccolta Vinciana, 2004), 44: 'Al coro poi solo l'anno 1470 il padre fra Francesco da Milano, che fu il primo priore, gli fece le sedie'. Ponzoni claimed that 'vi sono usati gli avanzi dell'antico coro, fatto costruire dal Beato Sestio nel 1470' although he failed to cite his sources for this attribution. Carlo Ponzoni, *Le Chiese di Milano* (Milan: Arti Grafiche Milanese, 1930), p. 172. Ciati also attributes the lower panels to the 1470 choir. Bruna Ciati, 'Il coro', in *Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milano* (Milan: Banca Popolare di Milano, 1983), p. 215.

<sup>127</sup>See Ferretti (1982), fig. 590.

Milan and Spilimbergo suggests the use of prefabricated materials. Since intarsia *a toppo* was by nature prefabricated en masse, specialist workshops could have dispatched panels across northern Italy.

Intarsia panels in the Benedictine abbey church of San Nicola in Rodengo near Brescia have a similar elementary quality, but were not constructed using the *a toppo* technique. Constructed by Cristoforo Rocchi around 1480, the stall-backs repeat four basic intarsia designs with little variation (Fig. 68).<sup>128</sup> The intarsia panels portray crenellated buildings with simple rectangular windows and chequered pavements, stylistically very close to the Cozzi panels. The continuous coved canopy, common on fourteenth-century stalls, lends the Rodengo stalls a slightly archaic appearance.

Arabesque or geometric intarsia patterns decorated seat-backs and substalls in choirs created by the Canozi workshop and their followers.<sup>129</sup> However, some workshops placed such abstract designs on upper stall-backs, demonstrating the plurality of styles employed for choir furniture. Although modern art historians may consider perspective intarsia to be more refined, contemporaries did not necessarily view non-figurative panels as inferior, given their prevalence in the region.

In the mid-fifteenth-century choir of the Conventual Franciscan church of San Francesco in Brescia, inventive geometric patterns in intarsia *alla certosina* dominate the upper stall-backs.<sup>130</sup> Designs feature interlocking stars, lozenges and circles, and four stalls incorporate mother-of-pearl in patterns reminiscent of Islamic carpet designs (Fig. 69).<sup>131</sup> The seat-backs and desk-panels are decorated with repeating patterns depicting cubes in perspective. A similar motif occupies the coved canopies in Rodengo and later substalls in

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<sup>128</sup>Elena Lucchesi Ragni, Ida Gianfranceschi and Maurizio Mondini, *Il coro delle monache* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), p. 15. The four basic scenes are: an interior scene repeated eight times; architecture with balconies repeated seven times; a courtyard with a closed door repeated eight times; and a courtyard with a wooden roof and two windows in the background, repeated eight times. In the interior scenes, various different objects are portrayed such as books and fruit. A carpenter from Pavia called Cristoforo Rocchi was commissioned to make a wooden model of Pavia Cathedral in 1488, although it is not certainly the same craftsman. Henry A. Millon and Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, eds, *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo. The Representation of Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), cat. 54, pp. 462–63.

<sup>129</sup>See for example the substalls of Parma Cathedral. The style was used for decorative elements in the choir stalls of Fra Giovanni da Verona, for instance in Santa Maria in Organo in Verona.

<sup>130</sup>The stalls have indications that they have been moved, such as breaks in the cornice, suggesting that they predate the rebuilding of the *cappella maggiore* in 1463. See below, p. 150.

<sup>131</sup>Geometric designs incorporating mother-of-pearl were also used for *cassoni* in the fifteenth century. Two examples are in the Museo Leone in Vercelli and the Museo Civico in Turin. See Augusto Pedrini, *L'ambiente, il mobilio e le decorazioni del Rinascimento in Italia* (Turin: Itala Ars, 1925), p. 74, Figg. 171, 172.

Santa Maria del Carmine in Brescia.<sup>132</sup> In reductively abstract design, upper stall-backs in the Carmine contain plain circular panels within square frames (Fig. 70).<sup>133</sup> Further repeating mathematical patterns of cubes and triangles were used in the Carmine stalls, and later on the nave pulpit in San Giuseppe in Brescia.<sup>134</sup> The penchant for geometric patterns in Brescian furniture perhaps reflects the development of a local style.

Originally constructed for the Observant Franciscan church of San Rocco, stalls now in the church of San Giuseppe in Brescia were constructed by Clemente Zamara in 1500 and were closely influenced by the San Francesco furniture (Fig. 71).<sup>135</sup> A similar combination of geometric designs occupies the stall-backs, while carvings of birds and animals on the substalls continue similar motifs from the San Francesco stall-dividers. Some stalls display abstract designs of interlocking shapes, while two dignitaries' stall-backs depict the crossed arms of the Franciscan order, and the IHS monogram.<sup>136</sup>

In Sant'Anastasia in Verona in the 1490s, Lorenzo da Salò produced stalls in intarsia *a buio* decorated with grotesque patterns of vases and flowers amongst birds, putti and other creatures.<sup>137</sup> Two Dominican saints appear amongst the arabesque designs, their features expressed by incised lines filled with mastic rather than different tones of wood (Fig. 74).<sup>138</sup> In another Dominican church—Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan—a similar linear style dominates the upper stalls.<sup>139</sup> Dating to around 1510, the stall-backs depict plants in vases, angels, putti, and images of saints (Fig. 75).<sup>140</sup> Again, details were achieved through

<sup>132</sup>Morassi has dated the stalls to the first years of the sixteenth century, stating that they may show a style of an earlier period. Morassi (1939), p. 102. Fappani and Vezzoli date the stalls to the fifteenth century. Antonio Fappani and Giovanni Vezzoli, *La chiesa e il convento del Carmine* (Brescia: Giornale di Brescia, 1975), p. 56.

<sup>133</sup>Simple carved shapes also occupied stall-backs in the Duomo Vecchio, or Rotunda, in Brescia, where lozenges in relief are framed by rectangular mouldings. The stalls have been dated to the first half of the sixteenth century in Morassi (1939), p. 182.

<sup>134</sup>The pulpit must postdate the completion of the church in 1578. *Lombardia (esclusa Milano)*, 9th (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1987) (hereafter referred to as *Lombardia* [1987]), p. 575.

<sup>135</sup>*Lombardia* (1987), p. 576. An inscription on stall E4 reads: 'HOC OPUS IN SIGNIS PERFECIT CLEM[ ] ZAMA[ ] [...] CLARAS TOLLITA DASTRASUO M.CCCCC.' The church of San Rocco was situated beyond the city walls and became Observant in 1477. John R. H. Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan Houses* (New York: Franciscan Institute, St Bonaventure University, 1983), p. 87.

<sup>136</sup>Stall E4 displays crossed arms, and E12 the IHS monogram. Evidence that these were the terminal stalls is seen in the canopy, where the angels face the sides rather than the front.

<sup>137</sup>Rognini dates the stalls to 1489–93. Luciano Rognini, 'Lorenzo da Salò "eccelente intagliatore" ed il coro di Sant'Anastasia a Verona', *Verona illustrata*, no. 7 (1994), pp. 15–22.

<sup>138</sup>Two Dominican saints appear on stalls N20 and S2, but as they both hold generic books and palms, they cannot be identified.

<sup>139</sup>The comparison was noted by Rognini. Forcella dated the Milanese stalls to 1470. Rognini (1994), p. 25. Vincenzo Forcella, *Tarsia e scultura in legno in Lombardia*, 2nd (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1896), p. 23.

<sup>140</sup>Design of the intarsia saints has been variously attributed to the painters Butinone and Zenale. Maria Teresa Fiorio, ed., *Le Chiese di Milano* (Milan: Electa, 1985), p. 74. In 1510 the choir was moved to the



incised lines and cross-hatching in an inlay of only two contrasting wood hues—walnut and pear—producing an effect reminiscent of contemporary etchings.<sup>141</sup> At both churches in Verona and Milan, the same Dominican friar—Angelo Faella da Verona—was prior at various times.<sup>142</sup> Revealingly, he was prior in Verona when the stalls were commissioned from Lorenzo da Salò, and prior in Milan when panels for the new choir were made. The Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence also commissioned linear *a buio* stalls in the same period from Baccio d’Angolo around 1490.<sup>143</sup> The Florentine intarsia panels show candelabra, putti, and saints in a linear style using a limited palette of woods. These Dominican choirs reveal a rare correlation between style and patronage, although the limited range of available examples means the importance of this link should not be overemphasised.

Stalls in the Benedictine Cassinese church of San Colombano in Bobbio, in the Piacentine hills, were completed by Domenico da Piacenza in 1488, according to an inscription on the westernmost stall on the south.<sup>144</sup> The Bobbio stalls synthesise motifs from various artistic centres, showing how styles were widely diffused throughout the region. The stall-backs feature intarsia *a toppo* geometric lozenge designs, while images of flowers in vases distinguish the two dignitaries’ stalls (Fig. 72a).<sup>145</sup> These designs are strikingly similar to the flowers on terminal stall-ends in the Frari in Venice, but are almost identical to fifteenth-century sacristy cupboards in Santi Nazaro e Celso in Verona (Fig. 72b).<sup>146</sup>

Further features link Bobbio to the Verona sacristy, such as trefoil-cusped round arches

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new tribune, giving a possible date for the stalls. Fiorio (1985), p. 74. The stalls have a centralised figure of Sant’Ambrogio, with paired figures either side, suggesting that the choir was designed for its present location along the curved wall of the tribune.

<sup>141</sup>Ciati (1983), p. 218.

<sup>142</sup>Gattico (2004), 46: ‘il padre frat’ Angelo Faella da Verona, che fu fondatore del convento di Santa Maria delle Grazie dell’ordine di san Domenico nostro nella città di Padova e la terza volta priore di questo convento, l’anno 1510 riportò nel suddetto nuovo coro le sedie e fece far il pulpito triangolare per riporvi li libri corali da cantare e recitar li divini officii.’

<sup>143</sup>The choir was transformed in 1566 by Giovanni Gargioli during the Vasarian restorations. Umberto Baldini, ed., *Santa Maria Novella: La basilica, il convento, i chiostri monumentali* (Florence: Banca Toscana, 1981), p. 304.

<sup>144</sup>The inscription ‘HOC OPUS FECIT DOMINICUS DE PLACENTIA 1488’ appears on the exposed stall-end of S1. See Michele Tosi, *Bobbio. Guida storica artistica e ambientale della città e dintorni* (Bobbio: Archivi storici bobbiensi, 1978), p. 47.

<sup>145</sup>The intarsia *a toppo* around the panels of the two main stalls at Bobbio depicts flowers in pots, and is highly unusual. Similar patterns were used for a *cassoni* now in the Berlin Bode Museum, illustrated in Schottmüller (1928), 45, fig. 100.

<sup>146</sup>The sacristy cupboards have not been attributed to a particular woodworker, but Rognini dates them to the fifteenth century. Luciano Rognini, ‘Le arte minori’, in Giorgio Borelli, ed., *Chiese e monasteri a Verona* (Verona: Banca popolare di Verona, 1980), p. 602.

and tracery patterns on the stall-backs, suggesting that the same workshop completed both furniture projects. In Bobbio, the tracery patterns with their alternating blue and red painted backgrounds are remarkably similar to the inventive stall-backs in Piacenza Cathedral. For example, the unusual spiral pattern of stall N10 in Bobbio is identical to the spiral in the centre of stall 11 in Piacenza (Fig. 73). Such parallels suggest that the same tracery master was employed in both churches, which are geographically very close. In fact, the master of the Bobbio stalls—Domenico da Piacenza—originated from the city. Above sloping canopies, the cornice has a frieze of alternating carved foliage and tracery, similar in spirit to the carved cornice at San Zeno in Verona.<sup>147</sup> In Bobbio, stylistic parallels with Venice, Verona and Piacenza show the high level of artistic exchange across northern Italy and how far workshops would travel for commissions.

In summary, we see that fifteenth-century intarsia stalls could take a variety of forms. Panels depicted architectural scenes and still lifes in perspective, with simpler images using less sophisticated techniques, or arabesque and geometric patterns. Despite the plurality of styles, most intarsia stalls shared a basic characteristic: prominent stall-backs. Although carved stall-dividers, quadrants and canopies were integral features, intarsia stall-backs were given priority in the overall design.

#### 1.4.1 Carving of stall-dividers and quadrants

Intarsia stall-backs were only part of the choir ensemble which included carved stall-dividers, quadrants and canopies. Fourteenth-century stalls in Verona displayed elaborately carved stall-dividers but no quadrant spaces, instead employing plain panels and twisted standards between seats. In the fifteenth century, stylised pierced foliage carving occupied dividers and quadrants on both Gothic and intarsia stalls. Often two or more craftsmen were commissioned to construct choir stalls, suggesting that some specialised in carving and others in intarsia. As different styles of intarsia evolved, three distinct types of stall-dividers were developed in fifteenth-century stalls: foliage combined with pilasters; dense foliage volutes; and solid dividers with relief carving.

In stalls executed by the Canozzi workshop and their immediate followers, stall-dividers

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<sup>147</sup>At San Zeno, the frieze mostly consists of tracery, except over stall N5 and S5, above which small tabernacles could have contained painted coats of arms.

involved little foliage carving. In the earliest Canozzi work at Modena Cathedral, the substall quadrants feature cusped tracery with fleur-de-lys hand-rests, representing the remains of the Canozzi's Gothic heritage (Fig. 76).<sup>148</sup> On the stall-dividers, however, foliage carving arises from the seat-capping to partially obscure Corinthian pilasters (Fig. 54). In a compromise between classical motifs and florid carving, the pilasters are half concealed by the foliage. The transition to architecture at the top of the stall-divider intersects with the moulded cornice, giving a strong sense of horizontality. In Parma Cathedral, the Canozzi repeated the same combination of pilasters and vegetal ornament (Fig. 55), later copied by their closest followers. Pilasters emerge from foliage carving at Santa Giustina in Padua, San Bartolomeo in Vicenza,<sup>149</sup> Santa Corona in Vicenza, San Petronio in Bologna and Santa Trinità in Parma.

Developing from older models (such as Verona Cathedral), volutes of foliage carving stretching from the seat-capping to the canopy were produced by workshops outside direct Canozzi influence. Examples included the Cozzi choirs of San Zaccaria, the Frari, Santo Stefano in Venice, and Spilimbergo Cathedral, and stalls with a Gothic aesthetic such as San Francesco in Brescia and Sant'Ambrogio in Milan. In these designs, two foliate volutes are framed by the seat-capping and canopy, creating a pleasing serpentine shape. The carvings generally display generic natural shapes rather than specific leaves and flowers and their pierced, open quality, is reminiscent of tracery. A particularly virtuoso example is in Sant'Anastasia in Verona, where profoundly delicate carving of flowers, leaves and serpentine stems produces an almost filigree effect (Fig. 77).

The origin of these rich stall-dividers lies in northern Europe. Villard de Honnecourt drew an early design (here called a poppet) in his sketchbook from the first decades of the thirteenth century (Fig. 78).<sup>150</sup> Consisting of two symmetrical leaf-volutes enclosed by moulding, the design is similar to fifteenth-century north-Italian dividers, but was probably intended as a stall-end.<sup>151</sup> Stylised foliage was a ubiquitous feature of German ornamental design, as attested by the sketchbooks of Hans Böblinger, Master E.S. and

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<sup>148</sup>Also seen on stalls from Sant'Andrea in Ferrara, now in the Palazzo Schifanoia museum.

<sup>149</sup>These stalls by Pierantonio degli Abati are now in church of Monte Berico in Vicenza.

<sup>150</sup>For a biography of Villard de Honnecourt, see Bucher (1979), pp. 15–27.

<sup>151</sup>The design is codified V57, and an illustration can be found in Bucher (1979), p. 159. The text next to the drawing has been translated by Bucher as 'if you wish to make a rich poppet for a stall, hold yourself to this one.'

Martin Schongauer.<sup>152</sup>

In northern Italy, stalls with ornate dividers usually displayed similar carving in the quadrants.<sup>153</sup> At the Frari and Spilimbergo, quadrant carving reached its apogee. Instead of single 'C' shapes, quadrants form three connected curves, each filled with abundant foliage (Fig. 79). At San Francesco in Brescia and Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, instead of 'C' shaped quadrants, shapes were cut into the stall standards in designs reminiscent of early-Gothic plate tracery. At San Francesco, simple tracery designs of circles and oblongs were used, whereas in Milan busts of prophets, angels, birds and mermaids appear in roundels (Fig. 80).

Sculptures of animals, birds and figures occasionally appeared in carved dividers. Following the precedent of carved lions on the stall-ends in Verona Cathedral, figures appear on the terminal stall-ends of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, San Zeno in Verona, and Santo Stefano in Venice. In the Milanese stalls, four Old Testament figures wear caps with upturned brims and point to scrolls which would once have contained inscriptions (Fig. 81b).<sup>154</sup> At San Zeno, the figure of a bearded bishop saint holding a book (presumably San Zeno himself) is situated in the carving of stall-end N1 (Fig. 81a).<sup>155</sup> Animals, birds and fish feature in the carved stall-dividers at San Francesco in Brescia, perhaps intended to echo St Francis' association with nature. On the upper and lower points of the carved dividers, dragons, lions, fish and cats appear amongst the vegetal ornament.<sup>156</sup>

In contrast to openwork foliate carving, some stalls feature relief carving on solid wooden dividers, for example at San Nicola in Rodengo and Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. In the Rodengo dividers, two scrolls at the upper and lower extremes are decorated with relief carving of flowers and leaves and connected via an engaged pilaster (Fig. 82). This technique would be developed in the sixteenth-century stalls of San Girolamo della Certosa and San Giovanni in Monte, both in Bologna. Unlike openwork foliate carving, relief carving was closely related to Italian domestic furniture.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>152</sup>Bucher (1979), p. 380.

<sup>153</sup>However, this is not true for Sant'Anastasia, where the serpentine curve is continued in the hand-rest, with no foliate carving.

<sup>154</sup>The current positions of the stalls are N1, N12, S1 and S12.

<sup>155</sup>The other three terminal stall-ends at San Zeno do not have figures, but are nevertheless distinctive. Stall N11 has gothic tracery; stall S1 has a large sunflower; and S11 has more gothic tracery.

<sup>156</sup>Animals and birds were also included in the relief carving above the arm rests of the Franciscan substalls from San Rocco now in San Giuseppe in Brescia.

<sup>157</sup>For example, table supports in the shape of a scroll were decorated with relief carving in a table in

In summary, a general stylistic shift occurred in stall-dividers between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries. From extensive carving in the fourteenth century and some fifteenth-century stalls, the Canozi and associated workshops reduced barriers between stalls. Whereas in early stalls such as Verona Cathedral, divider carving was the main area of interest, in Canozi stalls these elements were subordinated to focus attention on intarsia panels. With no significant visual obstacles between stalls, the eye is led from one intarsia panel to another.

## 1.5 Intarsia iconography

Perspective intarsia panels used in fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries stalls generally depicted a dual iconography of architectural scenes and cupboard still lifes. Although some panels showed portraits of saints or narrative scenes, the two main formulaic motifs dominated production. Architectural scenes showed palaces, castles, churches and vernacular housing, often devoid of human life. Developed in the Florentine sacristy intarsias, cupboards contained liturgical objects such as chalices and crosses, books, bowls or vases. Later, complex forms were depicted such as musical instruments, caged birds and other animals, chess boards, clocks and mathematical devices. At Modena Cathedral, the Canozi brothers created and defined the iconography of intarsia choirs with generic panels of cityscapes and cupboard interiors in horizontal formats. The perspective views were framed by the open window shutters or cupboard doors, creating the impression that the panels were glimpses into real spaces. These framing devices gradually disappeared in later stall panels, leaving the objects or cityscapes as autonomous entities.

The quality of perspective intarsia panels varied enormously, from the simplistic repeating city scenes on the Santa Maria delle Grazie substalls to Fra Giovanni's magisterial work at Santa Maria in Organo. This varying quality shows the ubiquity of the iconography and its intrinsic connection to the intarsia technique. References to reality also varied greatly. Both architectural scenes and cupboard still lifes could be completely generic or could represent actual buildings and objects which had great significance to the church community. For example at Santa Corona in Vicenza, stall-back fourteen showed the crown

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Museo di Palazzo Venezia, Rome. Pedrini (1925), 116, fig. 281.

of thorns hung on a nail, a clear reference to the church's most prized relic (Fig. 83). Two images of churches on the lateral terminal stalls of the old choir in Santa Giustina in Padua surely represent—albeit in a slightly simplified style—the Benedictine church itself and its close Franciscan neighbour, the Santo (Fig. 84).

Two main interpretational problems surround these generic images. Firstly, their seemingly non-religious character. Although some of the city scenes depicted churches and a few cupboards contained crosses, most of the images have a decidedly secular feel. Secondly, the same iconography was present in the domestic setting, in *cassoni* panels, cupboards and *spalliere* in *studioli*.<sup>158</sup> Perhaps some of the most advanced intarsia panels can be seen in the *studioli* for Duke Federico da Montefeltro for his palaces at Urbino and Gubbio, the latter now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. How did these two iconographic themes develop? Why were such images, with their non-religious overtones, deemed appropriate decoration for choir precincts? Did they have particular meanings for the viewer?

Interpretation of intarsia cityscapes has placed them in the context of fifteenth-century painted representations of ideal cities. Ideas from architectural theory surrounding urban planning and contemporary architecture were translated into painted representations of imaginary utopian vistas.<sup>159</sup> Krautheimer concluded that the generic intarsia scenes on most choir stalls were unlike painted ideal cities, since they represented ordinary architectural scenes.<sup>160</sup> He argued, however, that the Urbino Palazzo Ducale intarsia panels depicted a more contemporary, classically-influenced architecture, directly influenced by painted ideal cities.<sup>161</sup> Although the two types of images look similar on a superficial level, they were produced in completely different contexts, in different media and for separate functions. According to Massimo Ferretti, since intarsia images often represent archaic buildings, they

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<sup>158</sup>This was noted in Ferretti (1982), p. 576.

<sup>159</sup>Panels depicting ideal cities painted by unknown central-Italian artists are in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in Urbino, the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore and the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. Richard Krautheimer, 'The Panels in Urbino, Baltimore and Berlin Reconsidered', in *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo. The Representation of Architecture*, ed. by Henry A. Millon and Vittorio Magnano Lampugnani (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

<sup>160</sup>Krautheimer (1994), p. 248: 'The urban views done in intarsia which concern us . . . presented the architectural reality which the craftsmen as well as their clients daily saw or could have seen . . . medieval reality inherited.'

<sup>161</sup>These intarsia panels are situated on doors leading to the Sala del Trono in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino, and are dated to 1474–82. Krautheimer (1994), p. 248.

do not have the same characteristics as painted ideal cities.<sup>162</sup>

The origins of the cupboard motif are not so enigmatic, since sacristy cupboards formed part of everyday church life and the image developed from a recognised pictorial tradition. In the fourteenth century, frescoed illusionistic cupboards decorated lower parts of chapel walls, seen for instance at the base of Taddeo Gaddi's Baroncelli chapel in Santa Croce in Florence, dated to c. 1328–30.<sup>163</sup>

The origin and meaning of perspective intarsia panels has been a source of fascination for art historians, varying from utilitarian to symbolic explanations. Vasari considered that perspective designs depicting buildings and small objects were developed because they utilised straight-edged wooden tesserae which were easier to cut, and that Brunelleschi himself had taught perspective to intarsia workers.<sup>164</sup> Vasari concluded that such designs were only chosen because they were easily adaptable to the inlay technique, which he thought a pale imitation of painting.<sup>165</sup> In a 1942 book, Arcangeli saw the strange light and perspective of intarsia images as solemn, poetic and intentionally mysterious.<sup>166</sup> Later, in a highly influential text on intarsia, André Chastel saw the development of intarsia panels as fundamentally linked to the emerging perspective technique, which required an ensemble or mosaic of geometric forms.<sup>167</sup> As they function essentially as illusionistic puzzles, Chastel identified intarsia panels as forerunners of the later genres of still life and landscape.

Some scholars such as Alfredo Puerari and Arturo Carlo Quintavalle considered intarsia cityscapes as genuine topographical views, even using them to reconstruct the appearance of

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<sup>162</sup>Ferretti (1982), p. 565.

<sup>163</sup>This dating follows Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi. Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1982), p. 88. This iconographic development was noted in Ferretti (1982), p. 575, and Haines (1983), p. 100.

<sup>164</sup>Translation by Louisa S. Maclehorse in Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique*, ed. by G. Baldwin Brown (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), p. 263: 'This work began in the first instance with designs in perspective, because the forms in these end with plane angles, and the pieces joined together showed the contours, and the work appeared all of one flat piece, though it was made up of more than a thousand.' Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori. Volume secondo*, ed. by Paola Della Pergola, Luigi Grassi and Giovanni Previtali (Novara: Istituto geografico de Agostini, 1967), p. 246: 'né restò ancora di mostrare a quelli che lavoravano le tarsie, che é un'arte di commettere legni di colori, e tanto gli stimolo, che' é fu cagione di buono uso e molte cose utili che si fece di quel magisterio'.

<sup>165</sup>Translation by Louisa S. Maclehorse in Vasari (1960), p. 263: 'And because such a line of work consists only in the choice of designs that may be adapted to it—those containing blocks of buildings and objects with rectangular outlines to which force and projection can be lend by means of light and shade—it has always been exercised by persons possessing more patience than skill in design.'

<sup>166</sup>Arcangeli (1942), p. 19.

<sup>167</sup>Chastel (1953), pp. 141–54.

lost buildings.<sup>168</sup> In his overview of the intarsia technique, Ferretti saw a certain tautology in the way in which wooden objects such as boxes and musical instruments were depicted in what are essentially wooden pictures, imbuing intarsia panels with a certain tautological significance.<sup>169</sup> He concluded that perspective intarsia panels were not just intended to trick the eye, but that their sense of mathematical harmony, symbolism and abstraction were appropriate for decorating places reserved for meditation and study such as choirs and *studioli*.<sup>170</sup>

More recently, Bagatin concluded that since many intarsia scenes were repetitive and restricted, they were not intended to be admired for their symbolic meaning but for the new and illusionistic way in which they were represented.<sup>171</sup> According to some scholars, intarsia iconography should be interpreted in a symbolic way, with each detail becoming a meditation on religious life. It is tempting to decode these enigmatic images as remedies for monastic boredom or even as mnemonic devices.<sup>172</sup> However, these symbolic and practical functions, as engaging and convincing as they may be, are purely speculative.

Contemporary texts can provide greater insights into the value placed on intarsia iconography. In a well-known text on intarsia, the humanist writer and rhetorician Matteo Colacio praised the choir of Cristoforo and Lorenzo Canozzi and Pierantonio degli Abati in the Santo in Padua.<sup>173</sup> Written in 1475 but printed in 1486, the text is in the form of a laudatory letter to the three woodworkers in humanist Latin, based on ancient examples (see the text in Appendix B.1, p. 289). Firstly, Colacio introduced the technique of

<sup>168</sup>Puerari claimed that an image of a church in the Cremona Cathedral choir depicted the fifteenth-century façade of San Pietro al Po. Puerari (1967), p. 94. See also Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, ‘Tarsie e Urbanistica’, *Critica d’arte* 11, no. 67-68 (December 1964), p. 40.

<sup>169</sup>Ferretti (1982), p. 575: ‘Integrandosi alla funzione tautologica del legno, essa caratterizza soprattutto quei soggetti per cui si usa riconoscere nella tarsia un capitolo essenziale nella preistoria della moderna natura morta.’

<sup>170</sup>Ferretti (1982), p. 577: ‘L’“illusionismo” non è la ragione prevalente delle tarsie; tantomeno la curva di ascesa. È anzi cosa del tutto diversa dal *trompe l’oeil* barocco o sensista: inganno degli occhi, simbolicità delle cose, armonia matematica, sono circolarmente connessi e sottoposti ad un astratto soggetto intellettuale.’

<sup>171</sup>Bagatin (1990), p. 51: ‘E pensando poi che la gamma degli oggetti inseriti nei cori da parte dei maestri intarsiatori . . . si mantenne abbastanza ristretta e ripetitiva, si può ritenere . . . che l’interesse principale fosse talora, più che la sottolineatura di un singolo simbolismo, il modo nuovo di vedere gli oggetti e di costruirne una efficace rappresentazione illusionistica.’ Bagatin also noted that many of the objects portrayed in cupboard scenes were easily portable by hand, perhaps adding to their appeal.

<sup>172</sup>This potential mnemonic function of intarsia images been noted by Ferretti in Cesare de Seta et al., *Imago Urbis. Dalla città reale alla città ideale* (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1986), p. 101.

<sup>173</sup>The full text is transcribed and translated into Italian in Savettieri (1998), pp. 17–21. Colacio was born around the mid-fifteenth century in Foroletto in the province of Catanzaro, but relocated to the Veneto to study and later teach rhetoric. He published various treatise defending the style of Cicero, and the date of his death is unknown. Nicola Longo, ‘Matteo Colacio’, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 26 (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1982).



perspective, stating that painters such as Antonello da Messina and Andrea Mantegna were modern masters of this ancient method, but that the Canozzi brothers were particularly extraordinary. After describing the wonders of the city of Padua, he told of his stupefaction at encountering the incredibly detailed and illusionistic intarsia panels in the Santo choir. The trompe l'oeil effect of the intarsia left Colacio so dumbfounded, he wrote that he had to brush his hand over the surface of the panel to verify its flatness. He then described various scenes, emphasising the variety of objects depicted, their lifelike quality and perspectival illusion.

Although, as Chiara Savettieri has identified, much of the literary style of the text is based on classical tropes from Pliny the Elder and Cicero, some of Colacio's themes are original and must be genuine attempts to convey his admiration. While ideas of realism and variety were classical devices, the theme of optical illusion which Colacio vibrantly emphasised was not a straight quotation.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, his opening statement summarised his incredulity: 'It all seems real to me. I cannot easily believe it to be an illusion.' He was continually impressed with the visual trickery of the panels: a carpenter's plane appears to come straight out of the picture, a lute half projects from a narrow niche and a bird in a cage 'holds men in doubt as to whether it is alive or not.'

Colacio repeatedly stated that objects portrayed in intarsia were more real than reality, asserting that French silversmiths could not produce a thurible as real as the intarsia one depicted in the Santo choir. Colacio ended his eulogy by praising the craftsmen's skill in conveying illusion through the medium of intarsia, stating 'because what can scarcely be painted in colour, you represented with wood.' It seems that for Colacio, the value of the choir panels lay less in their iconographic meanings than in their trompe l'oeil trickery, made even more impressive by the limitations of the intarsia technique.

Admiration for the work of Fra Giovanni da Verona in a 1519 Olivetan chronicle can give further insights into contemporary views on intarsia (see Appendix B.2, p. 294).<sup>175</sup> The author of this text emphasised how intarsia could trick the viewer, in this case through the depiction of goldfinches and other birds. Similarly to Colacio, the author expressed

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<sup>174</sup>Savettieri (1998), p. 12.

<sup>175</sup>*Liber cronicalis Monasterii Novi S. Mariae Annunciatae Montis Oliveti Laudensis civitatis* (Archivio di Stato Milano, Fondo di Religione, P.A. 5008, fol. 5) by an Olivetan chronicler in 1519. Transcribed in Giovanni Brizzi, 'Un armadio intarsiato della scuola di Fra Giovanna da Verona nel Metropolitan Museum of Art di New York', *Benedictina* 16, no. 2 (1969), p. 296n.

incredulity that such believable detailed pictures could be made from wood: ‘he precisely and exactly joined together and elegantly composed and completely varied faces of both humans and animals from the fibres and stalks of differently coloured woods’. The Olivetan text also used classical tropes including a quotation from the *Aeneid*, emphasising that Fra Giovanni was equal to the artists of antiquity.<sup>176</sup> The two contemporary texts emphasised the optical illusions created by intarsia and the extraordinary way in which they were created given the obvious limitations of the medium.

These two concepts cannot easily be distinguished. A fundamental point in this issue is the inseparable nature of intarsia technique and iconography. In choir contracts the iconography of intarsia panels was rarely specified but they were often requested to display ‘perspective’, emphasising the indivisible relationship between technique and representation.<sup>177</sup> This intrinsic link was also made manifest in a term used to describe intarsia craftsmen: ‘maestri della prospettiva’.<sup>178</sup> The iconography of cityscapes and cupboard still lifes were not depicted in carved wooden panels in this period, highlighting the uniqueness of intarsia images.

Large intarsia perspective panels take this interaction between technique and iconography even further.<sup>179</sup> The intarsia worker had the challenge of creating legible images using only tones of different woods. Unlike paint, his media were naturally occurring wooden fibres, limited in their potential to convey reality. These constraints in fact required the artist to produce the most lifelike three-dimensional scenes, in order to trick the viewer that they were not just looking at a decorative wood mosaic. The skilled use of perspective in intarsia panels makes the viewer forget the properties of the materials used. Because he was

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<sup>176</sup>*Aeneid* VI. 848: ‘uiuos ducent de marmore uultus’. I am grateful to Daniel Hadas for pointing out the quotation from Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Vasari also acknowledged that the intarsia technique was a revival of antique models. ‘How easy a thing it is to add some new discovery to the inventions of the past, is clearly shown to us, not only by the aforesaid fitted pavement, which without doubt comes from mosaic work, but also by these same tarsias and the figures of many different things, that closely resembling mosaic and painting have been made by our elder artists out of little pieces of wood, variously coloured, fitted and joined together in panels of walnut . . . The ancients worked however in the same manner with incrustations of fine stones: as is plainly seen in the portico of St Peter’s, where there is a cage with a bird and all the details of the wooden bars etc., on a ground of porphyry inlaid with other different stones.’ Vasari (1960), pp. 262–63.

<sup>177</sup>In the contract for the choir in the Santo in Padua, for example, the Canozzi brothers had to produce panels ‘cum tarsiis habentibus prospectivam’. Sartori (1961), p. 25.

<sup>178</sup>In the 1512 contract with Antonio de Zucchi for the stalls in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, the artist was referred to as ‘magistro de perspectiva et de intaglio de legnamo’. Adorni (1979), p. 170.

<sup>179</sup>I am grateful to Francesco Lucchini for illuminating discussions on the relationship between technique and iconography, especially with relation to metalwork.

using the most improbable materials, the intarsia worker had to create the most believable illusionistic images. As Richard Goldthwaite concluded, techniques such as glass painting and wood intarsia ‘were perfected largely as pictorial forms laden with illustrative material in a naturalistic style that was a virtuoso defiance of the inherent physical limitations of these media.’<sup>180</sup> This ‘virtuoso defiance’ was the basis of the intarsia craft.

Which leads us back to the iconographic question. In order to create illusionistic images, artists had to depict objects which lent themselves to perspectival representation, namely architecture and small rectilinear objects in still lifes. Buildings or cupboard shelves have distinct orthogonals, rendering clearly defined perspectival spaces legible to the viewer. Perhaps the most simple object to represent in perspective—a box—is depicted on a dignitary’s stall-end in Parma Cathedral, acting almost as the signature of the artist (Fig. 85). John White showed that clarity and strong lighting were essential in creating believable perspective intarsia pictures, both characteristics being present in the architectural scene and cupboard interior.<sup>181</sup> Both intarsia iconographies involved the trompe l’oeil device of shutters or doors which mediated between real and fictive space. As shown by the two texts on intarsia cited above, this interaction between real and fictive space produced in improbable materials also fascinated contemporary viewers. The two iconographic traditions were also to become central motifs depicted in later trompe l’oeil paintings.<sup>182</sup> Objects favoured by *intarsiatori* such as skulls, bird cages, books and flowers, would appear in niches and cupboards in trompe l’oeil paintings up to the nineteenth century.<sup>183</sup>

The essential interrelatedness of intarsia technique and iconography explains why similar images were used in different contexts in the fifteenth century, such as choir stall-backs, sacristy cupboards and domestic furniture. Iconography emerged from the limitations of the technique, demonstrating why these images were not produced in carved panels.

We should view the panels not for their specific meanings but in the context of a

<sup>180</sup>Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 141.

<sup>181</sup>John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 189–90.

<sup>182</sup>For example, Paolo Veronese’s frescoes at the Villa Barbaro at Maser, dated to 1560–68, explore the possibilities of architectural illusion. Cupboard illusionism can be seen in Giovanni Maria Crespi’s *Shelves with books concerning music*, c. 1710. Martin Battersby, *Trompe l’oeil. The eye deceived* (London: Academy editions, 1974), p. 57, fig. 52 and p. 101, fig. 114.

<sup>183</sup>Battersby explained that cupboards were popular subjects for trompe l’oeil paintings because the half-open doors increased the potential for illusion and an expansive range of objects could be included, allowing the artist to depict different volumes and textures. Battersby (1974), p. 91.

whole choir precinct. In the Canozi choirs of Modena and Parma Cathedrals, intarsia stall-backs were positioned so low that they were obscured by standing figures (Fig. 86), therefore remaining hidden in the most solemn parts of the liturgy. Since today these choir stalls are out of use, there is a temptation to view them as autonomous works of art. Perhaps, however, as Ciati concluded, the same ideological analysis used for paintings or sculptures should not be applied to what are essentially decorative, albeit diverting, devices on utilitarian pieces of furniture.<sup>184</sup> Intarsia decoration was certainly enjoyed by contemporary viewers, as shown by a Cassinese decree of 1489 which limited the use of intarsia to conventual areas of the church: ‘In order to avoid the admiration and murmuring, both of laypeople and of other people, which is accustomed to arise as a result of works of intarsia in inappropriate places we order that these works for the future not be able to be in any other places than the ecclesiastical areas of churches.’<sup>185</sup>

Iconography was often not specified in choir contracts, showing that patrons were not especially concerned with the secular themes of the intarsia panels. Metalwork of this period featured micro-architecture and foliate decoration regardless of context; similarly patrons accepted that intarsia panels depicted a certain range of images. The technique was the important factor, and the objects or views represented were chosen because they better exploited its illusionistic potential. Intarsia panels may have been interpreted in a symbolic way by spectators (especially in the sixteenth century) but this ideological reading was not necessarily intended by artists or desired by patrons.

## 1.6 Sixteenth-century stalls after c. 1520

Although the intarsia style persisted into the first decades of the sixteenth century, stalls increasingly displayed religious decoration through inscriptions and biblical narrative scenes. Although perspective scenes were not originally developed as religious or moral symbols,

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<sup>184</sup>Bruna Ciati, ‘Cultura e società nel secondo Quattrocento attraverso l’opera ad intarsio di Lorenzo e Cristoforo da Lendinara’, in *La prospettiva rinascimentale. Codificazioni e trasgressioni*, ed. by Marisa Dalai Emiliani, vol. 1 (Florence: Centro Di, 1980), p. 214: ‘la tarsia è essenzialmente elemento decorativo di una serie di oggetti ideati come oggetti d’uso e pertanto con una funzione squisitamente pratica, sia relativa alla vita familiare che al culto religioso’.

<sup>185</sup>Tommaso Leccisotti, ‘Congregationis S. Iustinae de Paduae O.S.B. Ordinationes Capitulorum Generalium. Parte II (1475–1504)’, *Miscellanea cassinese* 35 (1970), pp. 55–56: ‘Ad fugiendam tam laycorum quam ceterorum hominum admirationem et mus[s]itationem que ex ipsis tarsie operibus in locis non congruentibus oriri solet, ordinamus ut tarsie nullus aliis in locis quam in ecclesis rebusque ecclesiasticis fieri de cetero possint.’ Translation from Winkelmess (1996), p. 74.

panels in the choir of the church of San Girolamo della Certosa in Bologna explained the meaning of the images through Latin inscriptions. The stalls were constructed by Biagio de' Marchi da Crema in 1538, whose ancestors had worked at San Petronio in Bologna in the fifteenth century.<sup>186</sup> Architectural city scenes and cupboards filled with flowers, fruit and musical instruments which had long been depicted in choir stalls, became symbolically charged. For example on stall N13, above a vase of flowers and wheat is the phrase 'Atendite ut fructu[m] plurimum afferatis' or 'make sure that you bear much fruit' (Fig. 87a), becoming a meditation on the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Above a city scene with a church campanile (stall S14) are the words 'Audiam quid in me loquatur Dominus' or 'may I hear what God says to me' (Fig. 87b), relating the summoning sound of the belltower to the spiritual openness needed to listen to the word of God.

In the Camaldolese church of San Michele in Isola in Venice, intarsia choir stalls were constructed by Alessandro Bigni on the raised barco in the centre of the nave in 1534 (Fig. 88).<sup>187</sup> The panels exhibit a similar linear style to the stalls in Sant'Anastasia and Santa Maria delle Grazie, where incised lines rather than different tones create details. The three central stalls depict saints Mark, Michael and Romuald of Ravenna (founder of the Camaldolese order) holding a model of the church.<sup>188</sup> Cross-hatching was used to depict shadows, an effect reminiscent of contemporary engravings. Bigni described the aged facial features of St Romuald using marks similar to Dürer's etching style, seen for example in his *St Simon* dated to 1523.<sup>189</sup> In San Michele, two biblical inscriptions appeared on each stall: one in a roundel on the seat-capping, the other incorporated into the intarsia either on the stall-back or seat-back, infusing the furniture with spiritual meaning.<sup>190</sup>

Although some narrative scenes had been used on choir stalls in earlier periods,<sup>191</sup> they became more widespread in the sixteenth century. Fra Damiano Zambelli completed the choir of San Domenico in Bologna with intarsia scenes of the Old Testament on the north

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<sup>186</sup>Raule (1961), pp. 43–47.

<sup>187</sup>The central stall has two inscriptions on the arm rests: 'ALEXANDER BIGNUS BERGOMENSIS FACIEBAT' on the left, and 'MDXXXIIII DIE VI SEPTEMBRIS' on the right.

<sup>188</sup>The saints were identified by Meneghin. Vittorino Meneghin, *S. Michele in Isola di Venezia* (Venice: Stamperia di Venezia, 1962), p. 327.

<sup>189</sup>For an illustration, see Erwin Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, First Princeton Classic (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), fig. 290.

<sup>190</sup>For example, on the central stall which has an intarsia image of St Michael, the seat-capping roundel contains the words 'In omnibus gratias agite' or 'in all things give thanks', from 1 Thessalonians 5:18. On the seat-back is the quotation 'Ego sum pastor bonus' or 'I am the good shepherd' from John 10:11.

<sup>191</sup>For example, an image of Abraham and Isaac appears on stall S8 in Santa Giustina in Padua.

range and from the New Testament on the south.<sup>192</sup> Completed between 1541 and 1551, each panel synthesised several narrative episodes.<sup>193</sup> Adding to the diversity of materials used in intarsia, Fra Damiano used metal pieces to portray armour and weapons. In the scene of *Judith and Holofernes*, metal was used to highlight the helmets and armour of the approaching army (Fig. 89).<sup>194</sup> Zambelli also made the choir for the Dominican church of Santo Stefano in Bergamo, in which panels depict narrative scenes from the Old and New Testaments, lives of saints, and views of Bergamo.<sup>195</sup>

The most well-known choir precinct composed of narrative scenes is in the civic church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. The intarsia panels show episodes from the Old Testament made by the intarsia worker Capodiferro to cartoons provided by the painter Lorenzo Lotto from 1524 (Fig. 90).<sup>196</sup> The rather small scenes have an understandably painterly quality, and as at San Domenico, several episodes were incorporated into single panels. The stalls are actually glorified benches with minimal pilaster dividers between the seats. At Santa Maria Maggiore, visual interest was focussed on the small narrative panels, which were considered so precious that Lotto and Capodiferro were commissioned to make special covers decorated with hieroglyphic designs.<sup>197</sup>

Structural and decorative aspects of sixteenth-century stalls were influenced by classical architectural style. Stall-dividers at San Domenico in Bologna are composed of fluted ionic columns, whereas at San Sisto in Piacenza, attached pilasters were carved in relief. Intarsia *a toppo* geometric patterns continued to decorate seat-capping and cornices.<sup>198</sup> Canopies of

<sup>192</sup>Originally, when the choir was situated in the nave of the church, the New Testament scenes were on the south range of stalls, and the Old Testament on the north. The two entrance stalls showed the Creation on the north and the Annunciation on the south. In their present position around the apse, the stalls on the left have the New Testament scenes and the stalls on the right the Old Testament.

<sup>193</sup>Venturino Alce, *Il coro di San Domenico in Bologna*, ed. by Renzo Renzi (Bologna: Edizioni L. Parma, 1969), p. 51.

<sup>194</sup>Inscriptions appeared above the stall-backs, identifying the narrative scenes.

<sup>195</sup>Silvana de Paolis Gibelli, *La chiesa dei Santi Bartolomeo e Stefano in Bergamo. Itinerario Storico-Artistico* (Bergamo: Ikonos, 2000), p. 26. Vittorio Polli, *Le tarsie di San Bartolomeo in Bergamo del Frate Damiano Zambelli* (Clusone: Ferrari Editrice, 1995)

<sup>196</sup>The intarsia worker Francesco Capoferri da Lovere was commissioned on 23 October 1522 to make a 'bello, honorifico et laudabile choro'. Design of the panels was commissioned to Bartolomeo Genzina de Cabrini on 29 October 1523, but due to his premature death two months later, Lorenzo Lotto was contracted to finish the cartoons on 12 March 1524. The whole work was not completely finished until 1555. Francesca Cortesi Bosco, *Il coro intarsiato di Lotto e Capoferri per Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo* (Bergamo: Credito Bergamasco, 1987), pp. 18–20, 62.

<sup>197</sup>Lotto was commissioned to design protective coverings for the panels on 16 June 1524. Cortesi Bosco (1987), p. 125. Galis interpreted them as paraphrases of the narrative intarsia panels beneath. Diana Galis, 'Concealed Wisdom: Renaissance Hieroglyphic and Lorenzo Lotto's Bergamo Intarsie', *The Art Bulletin* 62, no. 3 (1980).

<sup>198</sup>Geometric patterns used by Fra Damiano Zambelli at San Domenico were flat designs reminiscent of

sixteenth-century stalls are either shell niches as at San Sisto, semi-circular vaults as in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, or overhanging cornices. Carved pendants were added to the underside of cornices at Santa Maria in Organo in Verona, San Domenico, San Girolamo della Certosa in Bologna, and San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna. Similar pendants were used in the decoration of contemporary ceilings, seen in the Sala degli Scarlatti in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, dated to 1523–38 and attributed to Pietro Lombardo or his workshop.<sup>199</sup> The ceiling is divided into square fields, each with a carved pendant in the centre, surrounded by foliage designs in relief. The close relationship between stall canopies and ceilings was also testified by contract terminology: in the 1531 contract for the choir of San Francesco in Cremona the canopy (*‘soffittatto’*) had to be decorated with two carved *‘pendenti’*.<sup>200</sup>

The intarsia technique gradually fell out of favour, and by the time Vasari wrote his *Le Vite*, it was considered to be out of fashion.<sup>201</sup> Although intarsia stalls were still being constructed, for instance in Santa Maria sopra San Celso in Milan, two innovative stall precincts of the later sixteenth century displayed carved narrative scenes.<sup>202</sup> The new choir at the Benedictine Cassinese church of Santa Giustina in Padua was carved by the French sculptor Riccardo Taurigny, using some designs by Andrea Campagnola, between 1558 and 1566 (Fig. 91).<sup>203</sup> In a typological arrangement, New Testament scenes on the fifty upper stalls corresponded to Old Testament scenes on the seat-backs and symbolic emblems on the substalls.<sup>204</sup> Although the relief carving betrays a north-European mentality, classical motifs of corinthian columns, caryatids and putti imbue the overall design with an Italian aesthetic. A similar decorative structure was used for the 1590s choir of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, also part of the Benedictine Cassinese Congregation (Fig.

textiles, and derive from some panels of the upper stalls in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

<sup>199</sup>Pedrini (1925), p. 33, fig. 48.

<sup>200</sup>Contract dated 2 October 1531: *‘in ditto soffittatto el ge sia doi fioroni intagliati de rilievo con li soi bottoni pendenti’*. Louis Courajod, *Documents sur l’histoire des arts et des artistes a Crémone* (Paris 1885), p. 55.

<sup>201</sup>See above, footnote 165.

<sup>202</sup>The choir of Santa Maria sopra San Celso in Milan, with its intarsia perspective views, was designed by architect Galeazzo Alessi da Perugia in 1570, executed by Paolo Gazza and then finished in 1616 by Giovanni Taurino. Forcella (1896), p. 49.

<sup>203</sup>Ruperto Pepi, *L’Abbazia di Santa Giustina in Padova. Storia e Arte* (Padua: Edizioni Monaci Benedettini, 1966), p. 138. A series of contracts with Riccardo Taurigny begins with the contract for the choir stalls, dated 22 September 1558, in ASP, Corporazione Religiose Soppresse, Santa Giustina, busta 490, fol. 197r.

<sup>204</sup>For a description of the scenes, see Clemente Bellucco, *‘Il coro cinquecentesco della Basilica di S. Giustina a Padova’*, *Arte Cristiana* 49, no. 8 (August 1961), pp. 167–204.

92). Constructed by Gasparo Gatti di Pietro da Bassano, narrative scenes of the life of St Benedict on the stall-backs were carved by Flemish artist, Albert van den Brulle.<sup>205</sup> As in Santa Giustina, the Venetian choir displays grotesque decoration and classical architectural motifs on the cornice and stall-dividers.

Later sixteenth-century choir stalls in northern Italy developed symbolism and narrative scenes, becoming bearers of religious meaning. With the decline of intarsia, the taste for carved relief decoration returned. In the sixteenth century, these later stalls showed an awareness of domestic woodwork, especially the carved pendants of contemporary ceilings.

## 1.7 North-Italian stalls in their European context

A rich corpus of fifteenth-century church furniture exists throughout Europe, displaying an expansive variety of styles and iconography. North-Italian stalls, especially at the height of production in the fifteenth century, varied considerably from their European counterparts, both in basic form and the techniques and iconography used in their decoration. Obviously, north-European stalls are far too numerous to attempt an exhaustive overview, but a few general comparisons can be made.

In basic morphology, Italian stalls differ from those beyond the Alps in their lack of misericords, differently shaped quadrants and elaborately carved stall-dividers.<sup>206</sup> Whereas carvings of secular images, heraldic motifs and religious symbols were commonly portrayed on misericords in north-Europe and Spain, the supports themselves are not present on most Italian stalls (this issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three).<sup>207</sup> The absence of misericords is closely related to the differing shape of quadrants. In the fifteenth century, quadrants in north-Italian stalls were generally cut-out ‘C’ shapes, providing a niche for occupants to rest their elbows whilst seated. In most north-European stalls however, divisions between seats are characterised by convex curves meeting carved hand-rests, continuing via colonettes to the seat-capping. This convex curve followed the line of

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<sup>205</sup>Tracy E. Cooper, ‘The History and Decoration of the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice’, Ph.D. thesis (Princeton University, 1990), pp. 134–160.

<sup>206</sup>Choir stalls in the region of Piedmont and Valle d’Aosta in Italy tend to have more similarities with French Gothic forms, due to the proximity of the areas. See Romano (2002).

<sup>207</sup>Misericords could show a variety of motifs, both sacred and secular, which have been analysed in detail by Christa Grössinger. Christa Grössinger, *The World Upside-Down. English Misericords* (London: Harvey Miller, 1997).



movement of the swing seat as it was raised, revealing the misericord. The concave quadrants terminating in fleurs-de-lys hand-rests in Santa Corona in Vicenza (Fig. 93b) contrast with the convex quadrants in the cathedral of Saint-Pierre in Geneva (Fig. 93a), which terminate in carved animals or heads.<sup>208</sup> Italian quadrant sections were designed to be used by seated figures, whereas convex quadrants were adapted for occupants resting on a misericord.

The absence of misericords also affected a further peculiarity of north-Italian stalls: prominent carved stall-dividers. As we have seen, richly carved dividers were a common feature of Gothic and Venetian furniture especially. Dividers projected forward from the back of the stall, occupying the surface of the seat-capping between each stall. Since there were no misericords on which to lean, figures stood further forward in the stall, beyond the seemingly obtrusive dividers. The functional link between prominent stall-dividers and the absence of misericords is also attested by some earlier German furniture. Thirteenth-century stalls in Altenberg Cathedral (Fig. 94) and mid fourteenth-century stalls in Erfurt Cathedral have thickly carved stall-dividers containing foliage and animals, but unusually for north-European stalls, no misericords.<sup>209</sup>

A significant difference between north-Italian stalls and their European counterparts was the use of intarsia and its associated iconographies. Many choirs outside Italy displayed tracery or images of saints or biblical narratives.<sup>210</sup> Intarsia was used to a limited extent on church furniture outside Italy, for instance in Plasencia Cathedral in Spain<sup>211</sup> and the sedilia in Ulm Cathedral in Germany.<sup>212</sup> The three-seated sedilia was decorated with very

<sup>208</sup>The stalls in Geneva Cathedral are dated to around 1432–36. Corinne Charles, *Stalles sculptées du XVe siècle. Genève et le Duché de Savoie* (Paris: Picard, 1999), p. 149.

<sup>209</sup>For Altenberg, see Busch (1928), p. 56, fig. 6. Wood for the Erfurt stalls has been dendrochronologically dated to 1328–29, but construction of the stalls could have lasted until 1364–65. Rainer Müller and Thomas Nitz, *Das Chorgestühl des Erfurter Doms*, Arbeitsheft des Thüringischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege (Neue Folge) no. 20.1 (Erfurt 2002), p. 39.

<sup>210</sup>The carved stalls in the cathedral of Sainte-Pierre in Geneva, dated to around 1432–36, depict figures of prophets and apostles illustrating the theme of the ‘double creed’, beneath a delicately carved tracery canopy. Originally, each range depicted six prophets, six apostles and a sibyl, but only part of the south range remains in the cathedral (arranged in a different order), and two panels exist in museums in Geneva and Dijon. Charles (1999), pp. 21–23, 149.

<sup>211</sup>The stalls in Plasencia Cathedral were completed in 1503, and the stall-backs were decorated with intarsia portraits of saints and apostles framed with intarsia designs of foliage, putti and animals. In Seville Cathedral the seat-backs of the substalls were decorated with intarsia patterns in 1464–78. Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords, Iberia: Portugal–Spain XIII–XVI* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), pp. 11, 43–44. German domestic furniture embraced the intarsia technique only after the sixteenth century.

<sup>212</sup>The date 30 November 1468 is inscribed on the sedilia dorsal. David Gropp, *Das Ulmer Chorgestühl und Jörg Syrlin der Ältere* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1999), p. 21.

simple intarsia *a toppo* patterns, but the overall design showed north-European Gothic design sensibilities.

In summary, whereas stalls in England, France, Germany, Switzerland and the Iberian peninsula share similar morphologies and design sources, those in northern Italy are noticeably divergent. The basic structure of the seating, woodworking techniques and iconographies were unique. Despite the continuing influence of northern Europe a distinctive style of Italian church furniture emerged.

## 1.8 Conclusion

This overview of north-Italian choir stalls from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, has revealed a stylistic narrative. In the fourteenth century, stalls displayed continuous coved canopies, foliate dividers and carved reliefs or tracery on the stall-backs. Some early stalls had stone canopies, which were later developed into Gothic three-dimensional wooden canopies in the fifteenth century. This period witnessed the building of many choir precincts in a variety of different styles. A division emerged between carved Gothic stalls, either with cornices or three-dimensional canopies, and stalls based around intarsia panels. Diverse intarsia styles centered around the prolific Canozi workshop, and although iconography remained constant, panels varied greatly in scale and quality. Whereas in the fifteenth century, intarsia imagery had been largely generic, in the following century inscriptions and biblical narrative scenes imbued choirs with increased religious symbolism. In many stalls of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, carved foliate volutes created clear divisions between stalls. By the sixteenth century, subtle classical-style features prevailed.

This chapter has also touched upon the interrelated issues of survival and chronology. The stylistic narrative has only been constructed from extant stalls, which dramatically vary in number from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. From the surviving evidence, it would appear that the second half of the fifteenth century witnessed a significant increase in production of choir stalls in northern Italy. However, analysis of destroyed stalls from other periods, such as those by the Da Baiso workshop in the early fifteenth century, could change this perspective. That said, the apparent building boom after 1460 does require an explanation. Did the development of intarsia techniques inspire new commissions?

Was a new importance placed on the choir area? In the second half of the sixteenth century, noticeably fewer choirs were built, perhaps because there was no need to replace fifteenth-century stalls, or because many choirs were in less visible areas behind the high altar. An examination of other aspects of choir stalls in the following chapters can perhaps shed light on this issue.

Some general conclusions have emerged surrounding stall design and manufacture in northern Italy. The stylistic history of choir stalls closely overlaps with domestic furniture and constructive joinery. A clear relationship between stall decoration and roof construction can be detected in both the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, showing that woodworkers were involved in various types of work.<sup>213</sup> Some of the seemingly unusual features of stalls (such as the star decoration on the fourteenth-century Cividale stall canopies) share characteristics with *cassoni*, beds and ceilings, as craftsmen borrowed motifs from their domestic furniture repertoire. Italian stalls were also influenced by their French and German counterparts, but in decorative features such as foliate carving and tracery rather than in morphology.

Woodworkers producing both carved and intarsia furniture consciously reflected on their craft, the materials used and the function of the seats themselves. Intarsia perspective panels developed from the need to produce legible images despite the limitations of the medium itself. In addition, the ability to draw in perspective was a vital skill for a furniture designer, as a survey of contract drawings will show. Still lifes often contained woodworkers' tools, seen for example in Paolo Sacca's choir in San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna, in which a carpenter's plane was depicted beneath a caged bird (Fig. 95).<sup>214</sup> In this context, the tools become almost a meditation on the woodworkers' craft. Intarsia *atoppo* motifs of stools or chairs added a more lighthearted aspect, in which viewers were invited to compare the grand, decorated stall with a simplified, miniature version. In carved stalls, woodworkers also exploited the interaction between material and representation. In Sant'Ambrogio in Milan and San Francesco in Pavia, different species of trees were represented on the stall-backs, exploring the idea of representing the source of wood in

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<sup>213</sup>Choir stall craftsmen also made doors, as documented by the commissioning of the doors of Parma Cathedral to Luchino Bianchino in 1493. Angelo Pezzana, *Storia della città di Parma*, vol. 5 (Parma: Dalla Reale, 1859), Appendix p. 29, document XXVIII.

<sup>214</sup>The inscription on stall-back 4 reads 'ETIAM VOLUCRES IN CAVEIS CANENTES DEUM LAUDANT' or 'birds in cages also praise God by singing'.

the medium itself. Lifelike twisted wooden branches formed stall-dividers in San Zeno in Verona, giving a *trompe l'oeil* effect of a different nature to that created by illusionistic intarsia panels.

Churches of the same religious or secular order did not necessarily have choir stalls of a similar style. For example, the Cozzi workshop produced choir stalls for the Benedictine convent of San Zaccaria in Venice, the Franciscan church of the Frari, the Augustinians at Santo Stefano, and the parish priests of Santa Maria in Spilimbergo. Only very vague connections can be made within orders, one example being the Dominicans in the late fifteenth century, who favoured the linear style. In the sixteenth century, some monk-woodworkers were commissioned by fellow members of the same religious order: Fra Giovanni da Verona, for example, produced several precincts for the Monteolivetan order. However, this generalisation should not be overemphasised, since there were few concrete connections between style and corporate patronage.

In the fifteenth century, many varied choir stall designs were available for patrons. Gothic and Renaissance style coexisted, and were decorated with carved relief, tracery or intarsia. Patrons combined different styles in the church fabric, for example at San Zeno in Verona where in the same period Abbot Correr commissioned Mantegna's Renaissance altarpiece and Gothic choir stalls complete with carving and tracery.<sup>215</sup> Aside from the Venetian style, few local styles can be detected except perhaps a penchant for geometric decoration in Brescia. Woodworkers frequently travelled around northern Italy for commissions, diffusing different styles across the region.

Choir stalls in the fifteenth century were built in a variety of forms designed to impress the viewer. As the vicar of Cremona Cathedral explained, the 'grand and wonderful design' of their new stalls enthralled and captivated visitors to the church and were a potent source of civic pride. Elaborate designs and rich surface decoration were considered appropriate for furniture that played such an integral part of the liturgical life of the church. In addition to their visual richness, stalls were expensive additions to the church fabric, as an analysis of choir contracts will show.

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<sup>215</sup>Mantegna and Abbot Correr were in communication over the altarpiece as early as 1457 but payments for its transportation from Padua only appear between July 1459 and January 1460. Puppi (1972), pp. 21, 28.

## Chapter 2

# Choir Contracts

In 1468, the patron Biagio de' Cesani successfully sued the woodworker Giacomo for attempting to make the choir stalls for Sant'Antonino in Venice in a more elaborate style than had originally been agreed. The woodworker had tried to 'improve on the contract drawing and bring himself honour' but was instructed by the court to complete the stalls in the contracted manner.<sup>1</sup> This case illustrates the crucial role of contractual obligations, to which woodworkers were expected to adhere exactly. Stalls were not just the product of artistic creativity, but of detailed discussions between artist and patron. In northern Italy, ornately carved and inlaid church furniture proceeded from carefully planned commissioning procedures, as evidenced by surviving contracts.

In this chapter, I will examine choir contracts to gain insights into the legal responsibilities of artists, and into what patrons understood about the visual aspects of the stalls. Contracts for altarpieces, fresco cycles and sculpture from this period have been collated and subjected to specific studies by Hannelore Glasser<sup>2</sup>, Michelle O'Malley<sup>3</sup> and Christa Gardner von Teuffel<sup>4</sup> amongst others.<sup>5</sup> No such study has been made on choir

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<sup>1</sup>Translation by Susan Connell in Susan Connell, *The Employment of Sculptors and Stonemasons in Venice in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), pp. 185, 288: 'per miorar de lamostra efarse honor'. See below, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Glasser (1965).

<sup>3</sup>O'Malley (2005).

<sup>4</sup>Christa Gardner von Teuffel, 'The Contract for Perugino's 'Assumption of the Virgin' at Vallombrosa', *The Burlington Magazine* 137, no. 1106 (May 1995), Christa Gardner von Teuffel, 'Clerics and Contracts: Fra Angelico, Neroccio, Ghirlandaio and Others: Legal Procedures and the Renaissance High Altarpiece in Central Italy', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 62, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>5</sup>Connell (1988). Ellen Schiferl, 'Italian Confraternity Art Contracts: Group Consciousness and Corporate Patronage, 1400–1525', in *Crossing the Boundaries. Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991). Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford:

stall contracts, and in the final section of this chapter, I will compare them to other artists' contracts for sacristy cupboards, doors and altarpieces.

A wide variety of choir contracts survive from northern Italy and Dalmatia from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The documentary evidence does not always correlate with the extant visual evidence; most existing choirs do not have corresponding legal documents, and stalls survive for roughly half of the contracts considered here. This survey includes contracts from the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries in an attempt to discover any significant changes in contracting practice over this period of time, and in order to analyse a larger sample of data. Despite the survival of many documents, they represent only a small percentage of the choir precincts constructed. Some of the contracts surveyed here have been already transcribed in secondary literature, although often in obscure antiquarian sources. The transcriptions are assumed to be accurate, but in some cases the preamble or closing sentences of a contract have been omitted. Other choir contracts, such as the contract for San Zaccaria in Venice, have never been transcribed in full and are presented here for the first time. Unlike altarpiece contracts, these documents have not been collated and analysed before, and constitute a rich repository of sources.

The twenty-five contracts collated in this survey are, in chronological order, for choirs in Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua<sup>6</sup>, St Francis in Zadar<sup>7</sup>, the Cathedral of St Anastasia in Zadar<sup>8</sup>, Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice<sup>9</sup>, San Vittore in Bologna<sup>10</sup>, San Francesco in

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Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 1-14.

<sup>6</sup>Dated 22 September 1383 and transcribed in Sartori (1961), pp. 22-23. The original is in Treviso, Biblioteca Civica, ms. 1411, t. 32 fol. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Dated 20 May 1394 and transcribed in Petricoli (1972), pp. 117-18. The original is in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Vannes quondam Bernardi de Firmo, B. I, F. 13, fol. 200. This is not a contract for the beginning of work, as the craftsman Giovanni son of Giacomo de Borgosansepulcro was asked to complete the work within one month. A further document notes a payment made to the artist's brother on 12 August 1395, transcribed in Petricoli (1972), pp. 118-19. The original is in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Petra de Sarčana, Instrumenti B. III, fol. 55.

<sup>8</sup>Dated 23 July 1418 and transcribed in Petricoli (1972), p. 121. The original is in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Teodora de Prandino, Instrumenti, B. II, F. II, fol. 142.

<sup>9</sup>There are two contracts, both dated 15 June 1422, one with Alberto and Arduino da Baiso and one with Giovanni de Trigoli. Archivio di Stato Venice, Cancelleria inferiore, Notai, busta 24 (Rolandino Bernardi), ff. 70v-71r. The first is partially transcribed in Paoletti (1895), p. 14n, but both have been consulted and transcribed by the present author.

<sup>10</sup>Dated 11 April 1424 and transcribed in Zucchini (1917), pp. 26-27. The original is in Archivio di Stato Bologna, Demaniale, 120/1460 and has been consulted by the author.

Ferrara<sup>11</sup>, St Catherine in Zadar<sup>12</sup>, San Zaccaria in Venice<sup>13</sup>, the Basilica di Sant'Antonio in Padua<sup>14</sup>, Parma Cathedral<sup>15</sup>, Sant'Ambrogio in Milan<sup>16</sup>, Santa Maria in Spilimbergo<sup>17</sup>, Santa Chiara on Murano<sup>18</sup>, Cremona Cathedral<sup>19</sup>, San Francesco in Pavia<sup>20</sup>, Monte Berico in Vicenza<sup>21</sup>, St Mary the Great in Zadar<sup>22</sup>, Sant'Ulderico in Parma<sup>23</sup>, San Bartolomeo in Cremona<sup>24</sup>, Sant'Andrea in Vercelli<sup>25</sup>, San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma<sup>26</sup>, San Giovanni

<sup>11</sup>The first contract is dated 24 December 1428 and is partially transcribed in Luigi Napoleone Cittadella, *Memorie storiche-monumentali-artistiche del Tempio di S. Francesco in Ferrara* (Ferrara: Domenico Taddei, 1867), pp. 86–87. The second contract is dated 21 August 1431 and transcribed in Adriano Franceschini, *Artisti a Ferrara in età umanistica e rinascimentale* (Ferrara: Gabriele Corbo Editore, 1993), vol. I, pp. 144–46. The original is in the Curia Arcivescovile di Ferrara, Archivio Storico Diocesano, Pergamene, busta 8.

<sup>12</sup>Dated 13 December 1441 and transcribed in Petricioli (1972), pp. 126–27. The original is in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Iohannes de Calcina, Instrumenti, B. I, F. I, fol. 228.

<sup>13</sup>The contract is dated 26 March 1455 and is in ASV, San Zaccaria, Pergamene 1, loose sheet.

<sup>14</sup>Dated 27 April 1462 and transcribed in Sartori (1961), pp. 25–26. The original is in Archivio di Stato Padua, Notarile, t. 4889, fol. 205.

<sup>15</sup>Dated 9 May 1469 and transcribed in Fiocco (1961), p. 339. The original is in Archivio di Stato Parma, Archivio notarile, Gasparo del Prato, filza 2 (1466–1469). A further contract between the fabbrica of the cathedral and Cristoforo Canozzi and Pierantonio degli Abbati is dated 10 August 1471. The document (which has not been published) confirms that the choir was not complete, instructs the two craftsmen to make a lectern for twenty-five ducats depicting two open books, and two further series of stalls for the choir. Bagatin (2004), p. 268.

<sup>16</sup>Dated 16 October 1469 and transcribed in Biscaro (1905), pp. 92–94. The original is in Archivio di Stato Milan, Fondo di Religione, Capitoli, S. Ambrogio, busta 115.

<sup>17</sup>Dated 4 February 1475 and transcribed in V. Joppi, *Contributo IV ed ultimo alla storia dell'arte in Friuli* (Venice 1887), pp. 110–11. The original is in Archivio di Stato Udine, Notary Eugenio detto Tacito q. Remedio.

<sup>18</sup>Dated 26 June 1478 and transcribed in Pietro Paoletti, *L'architettura e la scultura del rinascimento in Venezia* (Venice: Ongania-Naya Editori, 1893–1897), vol. 1, p. 93.

<sup>19</sup>The first contract with Giovanni Maria Platina is dated 5 June 1483 and is transcribed in Carlo Bonetti, *Intarsiatori cremonesi. Paolo del Sacha (1468–1537)* (Cremona: Tipografia Centrale, 1919), pp. 80–86.

<sup>20</sup>Dated 24 January 1484 and transcribed in Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, pp. 288–89. The original is in Archivio Notarile di Pavia, Atti di Morasco Marchino, pacco 1478–89.

<sup>21</sup>The contract for the *spalliere* of the choir is dated 4 October 1484 and transcribed in Dani (1965), p. 19. The original is in Archivio di Stato Vicenza, notary Nicolo fu Taddeo d'Ascoli, libro 36, at date.

<sup>22</sup>Dated 27 February 1488 (modern style) and transcribed in Petricioli (1972), p. 131. The original is in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Iohannes de Salodio, Instrumenti, B. III, fol. 6. A further document dates from 24 April 1494 and is another contract with the same artist to finish the choir. It is located in Zadar, Državni arhiv, Spisi Zadarkih Bilježnika, Iohannes de Salodio, Instrumenti, B. IV, fol. 4, and is transcribed in Petricioli (1972), p. 132.

<sup>23</sup>Dated 4 April 1505 and partially transcribed in A. Ronchini, 'Intorno alla scultura in legno. Notizie storico-patrie', *Atti e memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di storia patria per le provincie modenese e parmensi* 8 (1876), p. 314. The original is in Archivio di Stato Parma, Notai di Parma, filza 687 (notary Anton Maria Raineri), at date 4 April 1505, and has been consulted and transcribed by the present author.

<sup>24</sup>Dated 1 April 1505 and transcribed in Bonetti (1919), pp. 105–06. The original is in Archivio di Stato Cremona, notary Simon Fossa, busta 247.

<sup>25</sup>Dated 26 September 1511 and transcribed in Bonetti (1919), pp. 107–08. The original is in Archivio di Stato Cremona, notary Antonio Sanmaffeo.

<sup>26</sup>Dated 25 November 1512 and transcribed in Adorni (1979), pp. 170–71. The original is in the Archivio Notarile di Parma, but was transcribed in E. Scarabelli Zunti, *Documenti e Memorie*, vol. III (1500–1550), a manuscript in the Galleria Nazionale di Parma.

in Monte in Bologna<sup>27</sup>, San Francesco in Cremona<sup>28</sup>, Santa Maria della Carità in Venice<sup>29</sup>, and San Pietro in Modena<sup>30</sup>. The collection comprises documents from northern Italy and Dalmatia dating from 1383 to 1537, encompassing choirs built for parish churches, cathedrals and mendicant and monastic communities.

Most contracts were written in Latin, although in some the technical body of the text was in Italian, while complete Italian contracts became more common in the sixteenth century. As with other legal documents, choir contracts first listed the date and place of the meeting, the witnesses present and the different parties, namely the artist and church representative. As Glasser noted, most artists' contracts of the fifteenth century were compiled by a notary, and the majority of published choir contracts were originally transcribed from the local notarial archive.<sup>31</sup> Further copies would have been made for the artists and clients.

The detail contained in choir contracts varied enormously. Some specified the stalls' decoration and iconography, while others minutely described the payment system or domestic arrangements. Standard elements included: the names of the craftsmen and church representative; the number of stalls; a rough completion date; which party were expected to provide raw materials; and the cost of the work. Even these basic terms were sometimes overlooked, but could have been communicated via verbal agreements or drawings. Supplementary contractual terms included descriptions of decoration and iconography; stipulations to imitate an existing choir (the 'modo et forma' term); comments on the quality or type of wood; forewarning of future appraisals by expert woodworkers; domestic arrangements such as food provisions and accommodation; occasionally the position of the stalls in the church; and requests for additional items of church furniture such as lecterns, doors or benches.

In this chapter, these specific conditions together with contractual terminology will

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<sup>27</sup>This document takes the form of a contract for work between Paolo Sacca and his nephew Giovanni Antonio Sacca, but contains details of the contracted work for San Giovanni in Monte. Dated 21 June 1518 and transcribed in Gurrieri and Gurrieri (1985), pp. 43–45. The original is in Archivio di Stato Cremona, notary Iohannes Maria de Vernatiis.

<sup>28</sup>Dated 2 October 1531 and transcribed in Courajod (1885), pp. 53–59. The original is in Archivio di Stato Cremona, notary Iohannes Petrus de Allia.

<sup>29</sup>Dated 26 October 1536 and transcribed in Paoletti (1893–1897), vol. 1, p. 128.

<sup>30</sup>Dated 4 September 1537 and transcribed in Giordano Bertuzzi, ed., *Il Millenario di S. Pietro di Modena. Vol II: Studi e documenti* (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1985), pp. 109–10. The original is in Archivio di Stato Modena, Notarile, F. 1510, n. 135.

<sup>31</sup>Glasser (1965), pp. 11–15.



be analysed, giving an insight into the legal and practical context of choir construction and enabling any documents discovered in the future to be placed in context. Contracts were just the first stage in the documented legal process between craftsman and client. In unusual cases, the project would not go according to plan and the case would result in litigation. Three such cases are described in this chapter, revealing the specific rights and responsibilities of artists and patrons.

## 2.1 Terminology

A variety of terms were used in choir contracts to describe the craftsman, stalls, and parts of stalls. Most artists were referred to as ‘master’ (‘magister’), but sometimes more descriptive terms were used. The stalls in the Cathedral of St Anastasia in Zadar were commissioned to Matteo Moronzon, who was called woodcarver (‘incisor lignaminis’) in the contract, indicating that his skill lay in carving rather than intarsia.<sup>32</sup> The term *incisor* was also used in the choir contract for St Mary the Great in Zadar in 1488, perhaps showing a local terminology.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere in northern Italy, the word ‘intagliator’ was used, for example Arduino da Baiso in the 1428 contract for the stalls in San Francesco in Ferrara was called ‘intaiator figurarum et lignaminis’.<sup>34</sup> More commonly, artists were called ‘masters of wood’, who could be carvers or intarsia workers. The artists commissioned by San Vittore in Bologna were identified as ‘maestri de ligname’<sup>35</sup> and the three artists who constructed stalls in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan were ‘omnes magistri lignaminis etcetera’.<sup>36</sup>

More specific job titles included ‘carpenter and expert in the art of intarsia, perspective and carving’ (‘marengonus et peritus in arte tarsie, prospective et intaliorum’) in the Cremona Cathedral contract.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in the contract for the stalls in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, Antonio de Zucchi was named ‘master of perspective and wood carving’ (‘magistro de perspectiva et de intaglio de legnamo’).<sup>38</sup> As we have seen, terms such as these placed emphasis on the technique of perspective rather than its specific iconography.

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<sup>32</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 121.

<sup>33</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 131.

<sup>34</sup>Cittadella (1867), p. 86.

<sup>35</sup>Although the term is in the singular, it probably referred to both artists: ‘pellegrino de zohanne de li anselmi da bologna e piero de antonio da fiorenza’. Zucchini (1917), p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>Biscaro (1905), pp. 92–94.

<sup>37</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 81.

<sup>38</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170.

Sometimes terms were misleading, as in the contract for panels for the choir of Monte Berico in Vicenza commissioned to ‘Petrus Antonius quondam Pauli de Lendenaria . . . intagiator’.<sup>39</sup> Although named as a carver, Pierantonio was only commissioned to make panels for the choir, which were presumably intarsia.<sup>40</sup> Different terms described craftsmen in payment records, including ‘master of the choir’, seen in payments to Lorenzo Canozzi for the choir of the Santo in Padua, where he was called ‘maistro a lo lavoro del coro’.<sup>41</sup> This term was used in accounts presumably to create a distinction between stall manufacturers and other woodworkers employed by the church.

Various terms could describe the choir and the stalls themselves, etymologically deriving from both Latin and Italian. ‘Chorus’, ‘corus’ or ‘coro’ appeared in almost all the contracts I have analysed, which referred to the wooden stalls rather than to the architectural choir or *cappella maggiore*. In modern Italian and English literature, the term can refer to the architectural choir or apse but the same interpretation should not be made of the medieval or Renaissance usage. A variety of different terms described individual stalls. In the contract for Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua, ‘seçollus’ was used,<sup>42</sup> with the more common ‘sedilus’ and ‘sedes’ used in documents for St Francis in Zadar and Zadar Cathedral respectively. The word ‘stallus’<sup>43</sup> appeared in the contracts for San Francesco in Ferrara, the Santo in Padua, Parma Cathedral, and Sant’Ulderico in Parma.<sup>44</sup>

To avoid confusion, in some contracts several terms were used, perhaps because different words were in circulation. For example, stalls in Cremona Cathedral were described as ‘stalli seu sezoli vel sedes in choro’ and in St Mary the Great in Zadar were called ‘statelli sive sedes’.<sup>45</sup> More unusual terms included ‘stadium’ in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan<sup>46</sup> and

<sup>39</sup>The contract is dated 4 October 1484 and is transcribed in Dani (1965), p. 19.

<sup>40</sup>The panels in the Monte Berico contract were probably intended to be in intarsia since a painter was involved to supply cartoons.

<sup>41</sup>A payment was made to ‘maistro Lorenzo, maistro a lo lavoro del coro’ on 27 September 1462, and was transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 26.

<sup>42</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 23. ‘Seçollus’ could be related to the word ‘segiolo’, defined as ‘sedia, sedile’, in Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1961–2002), vol. 18, p. 458.

<sup>43</sup>Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinatis* (Graz: Akademische Druck- U. Verlagsanstalt, 1954), vol. 7, p. 577: ‘Stallum. Locus, ubi quis habitat, sedet, stat.’

<sup>44</sup>For the San Francesco in Ferrara choir, see Cittadella (1867), p. 86. For Sant’Antonio in Padua see Sartori (1961), pp. 25–26. For Parma Cathedral see Fiocco (1913), p. 339. For Sant’Ulderico in Parma, see the partial transcription in Ronchini (1876), p. 314.

<sup>45</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82. The word ‘statellis’ could derive from ‘statium’, defined as ‘sedile, sedes’ in Du Cange (1954), vol. 7, p. 588.

<sup>46</sup>Du Cange (1954), vol. 7, p. 571: ‘Stadium. Sedile in choro’.

‘cathedra’ in Santa Maria in Spilimbergo.<sup>47</sup> Usually, the term *cathedra* referred to a bishop’s throne, so its use here may either indicate confusion or pride in the particularly large, ornate seats.<sup>48</sup>

Less consistent were descriptions of constituent parts of stalls, which probably reflected craftsmen’s technical vocabulary. Stall-backs were identified as ‘spallarie’ in the first San Francesco in Ferrara contract and ‘frontespicia’ in the second, showing how terminology was not always consistent.<sup>49</sup> ‘Screnela’ was used in the San Francesco in Pavia contract, ‘spalira’ in the contract for panels in Monte Berico in Vicenza, ‘spalarola’ in the Milan contract, and ‘spaliera’ in the contract for San Zaccaria in Venice. The word *spalliera* derived from the Italian for shoulders (*spalle*), and in descriptions of domestic furniture referred to panels that supported the shoulders.<sup>50</sup> Lydecker described three types of *spalliere* in the domestic setting: pieces of fabric hung on the wall; more permanent paintings and intarsia panels attached to wall; and panels which were integral to items of furniture such as *lettucci* (day-beds) and *cassoni*.<sup>51</sup> For example, the Morelli-Nerli *cassone* in the Courtauld Institute of Art in London has a vertical backing described as a *spalliera* in the account documents.<sup>52</sup>

Terms etymologically derived from the Latin or Italian words for ‘head’ could either refer to canopies or stall-ends, which on the plan of the whole precinct, were at the ‘heads’ of each range. In a document for St Francis in Zadar, the artist’s brother declared that he had received payment for four ‘capiti’, which could only refer to the carved stall-ends of the terminal stalls as there were four in total.<sup>53</sup> In the first contract for the San Francesco in Ferrara stalls, Arduino da Baiso was instructed to ‘item facere cappellum introitus dicti

<sup>47</sup>Joppi (1887), pp. 110–11. Santa Maria was a parish church which enjoyed civic patronage.

<sup>48</sup>Du Cange (1954), vol. 2, p. 226: ‘Cathedra: proprie est sedes, seu sessio honestior et augustior Episcoporum in Ecclesia’. Lewis and Short translate ‘cathedra’ as ‘a chair, a stool’. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 301.

<sup>49</sup>Du Cange noted that the word ‘frontispicium’ could refer to a church façade. Du Cange (1954), vol. 2, p. 617.

<sup>50</sup>The association of the words *spalliera* and *spalle* was noted by Peta Motture and Luke Syson in Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, eds, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: V&A Publications, 2006), p. 274. A consistent definition of the word *spalliera* is difficult to achieve as it was used in many different contexts. The word ‘spaliera’ was also used in Latin texts: ‘spaliera... ab Italico *Spalliera*, quod quidquid ad murum expanditur, ad *spallas*’. Du Cange (1954), vol. 7, p. 539.

<sup>51</sup>John Kent Lydecker, ‘The domestic setting of the arts in Renaissance Florence’, Ph.D. thesis (The Johns Hopkins University, 1987), pp. 43–45.

<sup>52</sup>Lydecker (1987), p. 288: ‘Jachopo detto del Sellaio e Biagio suo chompagnio dipintori... per dipintura d’un paio di forzieri storiati e messi d’oro fine, insieme cho’ la spalliera de’ detti forzieri lavorata’.

<sup>53</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 119: ‘pro IIIIor capitibus’. Lewis and Short (1998), p. 289: ‘Caput... regularly capite, capiti... the head, top, summit, point, end, extremity’.

chori ad similitudinem cappelli chori ecclesie S. Francisci civitatis Bononiae, cum uno Sancto Francisco in summitate, prout in Bononia'.<sup>54</sup> Although similar to the term 'capite', 'cappellum' probably referred to a canopy over the entrance to the choir.<sup>55</sup> Confusingly, in the second contract for San Francesco 'capite' was used to describe a relief to be carved on a terminal stall-end: 'cum Anunciata in capite ultimi stali ipsius cori', although it was unusual for a narrative scene to only appear on one range.<sup>56</sup>

A similar confusion between canopies and stall-ends resulted from terms etymologically derived from the Italian word for head: 'testa'. In the contract for the Sant'Ambrogio in Milan choir, figurative sculpture was requested for the large principal heads ('testali magno principali') and the small lower principal heads ('testali parvo inferiori principali'), their prominent positioning at the start of the upper and lower ranges identifying them as terminal stall-ends.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the contract for San Francesco in Pavia specified eight worked heads ('octo teste laborate').<sup>58</sup> This amount suggests that the term was synonymous with stall-ends, since rectilinear choir precincts comprised four on the upper row and four on the lower.

Occasionally, the stall superstructure comprising canopies, friezes and cornices was described. In the choir contract for Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua, the architectural term vault ('voltum') defined the stall canopy, with its 'cornici' or cornices. The same term was used in the sixteenth-century contract for Santa Maria della Carità in Venice, in which the decoration of 'il volto de la sedia' was specified.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps referring to pinnacles, the artist of the stalls in St Mary the Great in Zadar was obliged to include 'tressi procedenti', or projecting elements.<sup>60</sup> Friezes on the Sant'Ambrogio in Milan stalls were described using the words 'frisum' meaning border and 'lista' meaning strip or band.<sup>61</sup> Later, in the contract for San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, the cornice was explicitly defined as

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<sup>54</sup>Cittadella (1867), p. 87.

<sup>55</sup>Du Cange (1954), vol. 2, p. 125: 'Capellus: Umbraculum ligneum'. Cittadella and Bagatin translate the term as 'baldacchino'. Cittadella (1867), p. 87. See also Bagatin (1991), p. 19.

<sup>56</sup>Franceschini (1993), vol. 1, p. 145.

<sup>57</sup>Battaglia (1961–2002), vol. 20, p. 995: 'Testale... Sostegno verticale del colmo di un tetto o di una capanna... Testiera di un letto'.

<sup>58</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, pp. 288–89.

<sup>59</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), vol. 1, p. 128.

<sup>60</sup>I have not found a Latin or Italian translation for 'tressi' although it could relate to 'three'.

<sup>61</sup>Du Cange (1954), vol. 2, p. 612: 'Frisum: fimbria, lacinia'. Lewis and Short (1998), p. 750: 'Fimbriae... a border, fringe'.

‘the ornament that goes above the seats’ (*‘lo ornamento qual andera sopra dicte sedie’*).<sup>62</sup> Unusually, in the contract for Santa Chiara in Murano, a stall-divider or *‘la partison delle sedie’* had to be decorated with tracery.<sup>63</sup>

Structural elements could also be mentioned in choir contracts. The specific woods of oak and larch to be employed for the foundation or *‘fondamenta’* was detailed in the contract for Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua.<sup>64</sup> In the Milan contract, the foundation was defined as *‘planks of wood under the feet’* (*‘assides sub pedibus’*). A floor or foundation was identified in the San Francesco in Pavia contract as *‘solum seu fondum dicti cori’*. In this contract, perhaps *‘schossi super quo seditur possit fieri’* could refer to mouldings or hollows on which the stalls were placed.<sup>65</sup>

This overview of contract terminology has revealed a precise vocabulary to characterise these highly prized items of church furniture. Although some regional variations have been detected, general terms would have probably been understood by non-specialists. The terminology of distinct parts of stalls reflects their piecemeal process of construction and diverse aesthetic appeal.

## 2.2 Decoration and iconography

Choir contracts contained varying levels of instruction on decoration and iconography, depending on whether a drawing or sample stall had been supplied, or whether an existing set of stalls had been cited as a model (see Section 2.4).

The contract for San Vittore in Bologna did not specify any decoration because the artists had given a design (*‘ano dato el disegno’*). Similarly, in the Parma Cathedral contract, Cristoforo Canozzi was instructed to make the stalls in imitation of those in Modena Cathedral and according to a design.<sup>66</sup> Proposed designs could be changed according to the inclinations of the patron. For instance, the design for stall-backs in Monte Berico in Vicenza had to accommodate certain additions indicated on the side of the drawing.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170.

<sup>63</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), vol. 1, p. 93.

<sup>64</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 23: *‘bonis fundamentis de lignamine de quercu et [l]arice’*.

<sup>65</sup>*‘Schossi’* could be associated with *‘scotia’*, defined as *‘a hollow moulding in the base of a column... a gutter at the end of a cornice’*. Lewis and Short (1998), p. 1647.

<sup>66</sup>Fiocco (1913), p. 339: *‘che siano dicti stalli in quella forma quale l’immagine depincta’*.

<sup>67</sup>Dani (1965), p. 19: *‘secundum desegnum ibi ostensum cum certa remotione ex eo facienda a lateribus’*.

A painter was employed to make these changes, evidence that painters were involved in designs for intarsia panels (see Section 2.3).<sup>68</sup> In a comparable case, in the San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma contract, the craftsman was requested to provide extra pieces of carving and to change the intarsia designs.<sup>69</sup> In the contract for the stalls of the Santo in Padua, the stalls were described in detail despite the existence of a drawing (‘secundum formam designatam’). Contract drawings formed part of the legal pact between patron and artist, so the location of their storage was important and sometimes recorded in the contract.<sup>70</sup> In the Santo contract, the drawing was placed in a desk in the sacristy (‘in scrineo posito in sacristia dictae ecclesiae’).<sup>71</sup> As we shall see, artists were expected to adhere exactly to the designed scheme, with non-compliance resulting in legal disputes.

In the absence of a contract drawing, the general aesthetic of the stalls was outlined in the written document. Vague terms were often adopted, such as ‘intaglati et tarsiatii’ in the St Francis in Zadar document. Intarsia panels generally had to employ perspective and depict diverse scenes. In the contract for the Cremona Cathedral choir, the stall-backs had to be ‘ad tarsiam prospectivam’ with each stall displaying ‘its perspective different one from another’ (‘suas prospectivas diferentes unam ab alia’).<sup>72</sup>

Detailed descriptions of decoration and iconography appeared in the fifteenth-century contracts for San Francesco in Ferrara, San Zaccaria in Venice, the Santo in Padua, Sant’Ambrogio in Milan and San Francesco in Pavia, and in sixteenth-century contracts for San Francesco in Cremona and Santa Maria della Carità in Venice.<sup>73</sup> The first contract for the stalls of San Francesco in Ferrara in 1428 specified a figure of St Francis on a canopy above the main entrance, while the second contract requested an Annunciation scene on the stall-end of the last stall.<sup>74</sup> This would have probably been a pierced relief (or possibly two on either terminal), similar to surviving figures on the stall-ends in St Francis in Zadar, dated to 1394, which depict St Chrysogonus and the stigmatisation of St Francis. The rest

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<sup>68</sup>Dani (1965), p. 19: ‘et additione superinde facienda per egregium artis pictorie Bartholomeum q. Antonii ab Urciis novis civem Vincentie a lateribus ipsius designi’.

<sup>69</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170: ‘si como sta il disegno...aggiungendoli però certi lavoreri de comissa... [e] mutare le fantasie de li quadri de perspectiva et de li taglii’.

<sup>70</sup>Glasser calls contract models or drawings “‘visual” legal obligations made between the two parties.’ Glasser (1965), p. 119.

<sup>71</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25.

<sup>72</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82.

<sup>73</sup>The contract for San Zaccaria will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, and the contract for the Santo in Padua will be discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>74</sup>Franceschini (1993), vol. 1, p. 144: ‘et cum Annunciata in capite ultimi stali ipsius cori’.

of the decoration on the Ferrara stalls involved leaves, flowers and pilasters with pierced carving or tracery (‘*straforia*’) in the centre of the stall-backs.<sup>75</sup>

In the choir contract for Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, the decoration of the cathedra on the right-hand range was described in detail. Sculptures of angels and other figures had to appear on the stall-back and frieze or ‘*lista*’, while an image of the Annunciation on the upper stall-end would be supplemented by a figure of a saint on the lower stall-end, to be chosen by the church representative.<sup>76</sup> The other upper stall-ends should feature two figures, and the lower stall-ends one figure, again to be chosen by the patron.<sup>77</sup> The contract also stipulated stall-backs showing varied sculptures in eight different forms; friezes with figures of saints; figures of animals or similar forms above the canopies; and angels showing diverse attitudes above each stall.<sup>78</sup> The stalls had to be decorated with intarsia borders and where possible, wood carvings painted in various colours.<sup>79</sup> Carved stall-dividers, or pieces of wood in between single stalls—‘*assides que sunt intermedia inter singula stadia*’—were to show the same pierced design interspersed with animals or other forms.<sup>80</sup> The substalls had to terminate in a cornice carved in relief.<sup>81</sup>

Despite such detailed instructions, certain changes were made during their actual construction. The stall-ends have narrative scenes from the life of St Ambrose rather than an Annunciation and other figures of saints; the stall-backs depict images of trees which were not mentioned in the contract; and there are fewer figures of animals in the stall-dividers.<sup>82</sup> Other conditions in the contract, such as the angels in different poses,

<sup>75</sup>Franceschini (1993), vol. 1, p. 144: ‘et cum frontespiciis, foliis, florum et pilleris prout stat et laboratum est frontespicium stali quod erat in ecclesia Sancti Francisci, et ultra id quod *straforia* ponantur in medio cuiuslibet frontespicii.’ Du Cange (1954), vol. 7, p. 607: ‘*Straforatus*: ab Ital. *straforare*, perforare’.

<sup>76</sup>Biscaro (1905), pp. 92–93: ‘*cathedra... a manu dextra... cum scoltura in spalarolis angelis et figuris in ipsa lista designatis et annunciata beatae Mariae Virginis in testali magno superiori, et in testali parvo inferiori ponatur figura unius sancti ad libitum prefati d. praepositi*’.

<sup>77</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘*in aliis testalibus magnis principalibus per singulum testale ponantur duae figurae, in testalibus parvis inferioribus principalibus ponatur una figura ad libitum ut supra*’.

<sup>78</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘*scoltura in spalarolis variando scolturas per singulo stadio in octo mayneribus formatis, fiat figura in friso et sit figura alicuius sancti ad libitum ut supra, et super capite ponatur aliquod disignum alicuius animalis vel simile... fiat etiam angelus de supra variatus per singula stadia in actu suo diverso*’.

<sup>79</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘*et orla fiant intersiata... et assides ubi necesse fuerit et poni poterit pingantur de vario colore*’.

<sup>80</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘*assides que sunt intermedia inter singula stadia habeant fondum unum, scilicet foramen ubi sit intus aliqua scoltura animalis vel alterius designi tam in superioribus stadiis quam in inferioribus*’.

<sup>81</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘*stadia inferiora sint cum suis orlis relevatis et scoltis*’.

<sup>82</sup>There are twelve scenes from the life of St Ambrose depicted on stall-ends: two scenes on each of the four upper stall-ends, and one scene on each of the four substall-ends. The scenes have been analysed by Gatti Perer especially in relation to their architectural backgrounds, which she suggests represent

the pierced stall dividers, intarsia borders and polychromy, were followed exactly. The example of Sant’Ambrogio shows that a contract was just the first phase of an ongoing collaboration between patron and artist, in which ideas could be changed or modified.

The stalls for the church of San Francesco in Pavia were commissioned to the brothers Giovanni and Gian Ambrogio Donati on 24 January 1484. As well as the condition to make the stalls similar to the ones in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, further stipulations referred to the stall iconography. All eight stall-ends or *teste* had to be decorated, but two had to depict the Virgin Mary in a nativity scene and St Francis with his stigmata.<sup>83</sup> In Pavia, the artists were to follow the model of Sant’Ambrogio in Milan except that carved flowers should take the place of the angels above the seats.<sup>84</sup>

Some sixteenth-century contracts indicated intarsia iconography more precisely. In the choir contract for San Francesco in Cremona, intarsia imagery was divided into three sections. Two thirds of the panels had to portray architecture and landscapes, while the remaining third had to represent furniture (probably cupboards), acting as a comparison and proportion to the other pictures.<sup>85</sup> All the substalls had to be decorated with cupboard scenes, implying a hierarchy of images. The last two seats should have images of St Francis and St Anthony of Padua together with arms and insignia chosen by the friars of the church.<sup>86</sup>

## 2.3 Contract drawings

In addition to written documents, contract drawings formed part of the legal agreement between artist and patron. This section will discuss such drawings, other designs associated with intarsia panels, and the use and display of visual documents.

Pesenti has collated examples of Italian contract and demonstration drawings from the fifteenth-century Milan. Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, ed., *La basilica di S. Ambrogio: Il tempio ininterrotto* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1995), pp. 68, 70–85.

<sup>83</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 289: ‘in testa dicti cori facere figuras infrascriptas videlizet unam Virginis Marie in actu nativitatis in presepio et aliis similibus actibus suis. Item unam Sti. Francisci cum stigmatibus’. Only the stall-backs of the choir survive, so it is impossible to verify if this clause was carried through to completion.

<sup>84</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: ‘Eo salvo quod in eo loco cori Sancti Ambroxii ubi adsunt figure angelorum loco ipsorum angelorum teneantur ipsi Magistri facere flonos relevatos et intagliatos’.

<sup>85</sup>Courajod (1885), p. 54: ‘le due [parti] in pallatti et bellissimi paesi et lontani et verdure sufficientemente de tal cose, e l’altra parte sieno mobili che stieno al paragone et proportionione de gli altri quadri’.

<sup>86</sup>Courajod (1885), p. 55: ‘et in le due ultime sedie fare uno sancto Francisco et uno sancto Antonio de Padua con le arme et insegne che piacerà alli prefati frati de sancto Francisco.’



fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for sculptural and architectural projects, tombs, altarpieces, banners and wall paintings.<sup>87</sup> Although few stall drawings appeared in her thesis, they show some of the main characteristics she detected. Many contract drawings were annotated with information regarding the dimensions and materials to be used, or the iconography to be portrayed.<sup>88</sup> Contract drawings were unlike preparatory sketches, usually being executed with a confident, controlled and preconceived line, sometimes with simplified elements.<sup>89</sup> The intention was to communicate to the patron certain notable features of the proposed design and sometimes to provide various stylistic options.<sup>90</sup> In frame designs, often only the left-hand side of the drawing was drawn to a finished standard with the rest of the design simply sketched in.<sup>91</sup>

Three examples of contract drawings for choirs survive in the geographical and chronological range of this thesis: for San Petronio in Bologna (Fig. 96), Parma Cathedral (Fig. 97) and Santa Margarita in Bologna (Fig. 98).

The contract drawing for San Petronio in Bologna depicts a single stall in perspective set frontally to the plane. Two annotations accompany the drawing: the first written by the notary confirmed that the drawing corresponded to the written contract made with Agostino de Marchi da Crema on 20 January 1467; the other note refers to the price of the stalls.<sup>92</sup> In the design, all the decorative and structural parts of the stall were clearly delineated, from the mouldings of the columns on the stall-back, to the hinges of the swing seat. Care was taken over the drawing of carved elements of the stall, such as the elbows, stall dividers and brackets beneath the cornice. The outlines were confidently and clearly drawn, while a lighter wash delineated the shadows, giving an impression of the

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<sup>87</sup> Allegra Pesenti, 'The use of drawings in the communication between artists and patrons in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', Ph.D. thesis (University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2005).

<sup>88</sup> Pesenti (2005), p. 169.

<sup>89</sup> Pesenti notes that contract drawings can appear dry and schematic, giving them a timeless quality. Pesenti (2005), p. 229.

<sup>90</sup> Different decorative options were most notably offered in altarpiece frame designs. A drawing attributed to Benedetto Diana from the end of the fifteenth century is a design for an altarpiece of the Assumption of the Virgin for the church of the Eremitani in Padua, and shows three different column designs on the frame. The drawing is in London, British Museum, 1943-7-10-1. Pesenti (2005), pp. 151–52, fig. 143.

<sup>91</sup> O'Malley (2005), p. 210.

<sup>92</sup> The first note reads: 'hoc est designum secundum quod magister Augustinus quondam Marci de Crema magister lignaminis debet conficere sedilia in choro sancti Petronii ad pacta et secundum conventiones firmatas inter officialies sancti Petronii predicti rogatas per me Tideum de Pretis notarium die 20 Januarii 1467'. The second note reads 'El precio ultimo si e' trenta lire cho la pizola dal bracle in 30 donde se posa le brache siendo [stando] in pedi.' Transcribed in Guido Zucchini, 'Disegni inediti per S. Petronio di Bologna', *Palladio* 5, no. 6 (1942), p. 162. The drawing is in the Archivio storico della Fabbriceria, Basilica di San Petronio, Bologna.

smooth and shiny quality of the finished product. A frieze above the stall-back shows a florid pattern, probably representing intarsia *a buio*, and the cornice contains part of an inscription.<sup>93</sup> The stall-back and seat-back have been left blank, except for a series of mouldings, including a chequerboard pattern, which form a frame. The slightly squat aspect ratio of the stall-back panel and the chequerboard pattern frame are reminiscent of the choir stalls in San Francesco in Brescia, probably completed in the 1450s. At San Francesco, the two dignitaries' stalls, now placed centrally in the apse, are framed with the same pattern also seen in contemporary sacristy cupboards in the church (Fig. 189a).

The absence of a perspective intarsia panel on the stall-back in the San Petronio drawing is curious considering their prominent presence on the finished stalls. The design was obviously altered after the agreement since the shape of the stall-back was changed to a more vertical rectangle.<sup>94</sup> The most likely explanation is that the intarsia panels were executed by a different woodworker and then inserted into the stall-backs. The completed panels depict small, low quality and repetitious scenes, suggesting that they were mass-produced. As we have seen, strikingly similar panels were made for the choir of San Prospero in Reggio Emilia in 1458. The absence of an intarsia panel in the San Petronio contract drawing is reminiscent of altarpiece contract drawings, some of which only depicted the frame leaving blank spaces for the paintings themselves.<sup>95</sup>

The contract drawing for the stalls of Parma Cathedral would have been executed at the same time as the signing of the contract with Cristoforo Canozzi on 9 May 1469. Although no annotations accompany the drawing to confirm its status, until 1913 it was attached to the written contract in the Archivio di Stato in Parma.<sup>96</sup> As in the drawing

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<sup>93</sup>The inscription reads 'NVLVS AMOR DVRAT NISI FRVC'. Pesenti noted that in contract drawings for sepulchral monuments inscriptions were left incomplete because they were done by specialist craftsmen. The presence of an inscription on the San Petronio choir contract drawing however, suggests that the woodworkers also completed the inscription, which was in intarsia. Pesenti (2005), p. 126.

<sup>94</sup>There are few instances where both the contract drawing and finished piece survive, but it seems that small changes could be made. Slight differences can be detected between the contract drawing and completed altarpiece by Francesco Salviati of *The Incredulity of St Thomas*, which was commissioned in 1544. Pesenti (2005), pp. 163–65, Figg. 161–62. However, disputes could arise over the adherence to the proposed design, as in the Venetian example cited below.

<sup>95</sup>For example, an altarpiece contract drawing for a sculpted polyptych given by Bartolomeo Sforza to the church of San Vincenzo at Gravedona only depicts the frame. The frame was commissioned to Giacomo del Maino in a contract of 23 November 1486. The contract drawing depicts the frame, with spaces left blank for the figural decoration, the iconography of which was indicated in written notes. Pesenti notes that the design of the frame was of particular interest to the patron, and that the figurative scenes may not have necessitated detailed drawings. Pesenti (2005), pp. 137–38, fig. 131.

<sup>96</sup>In 1913 the drawing was stolen and in 1916 appeared in the Horne Collection in Florence. Pesenti (2005), p. 219. It is now in Florence, Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi, no. 5806 Horne. Giovanni Agosti,

for San Petronio, the Parma sketch depicts a single stall, but this time from the side. The carving and intarsia decoration were shown in detail, with coloured washes denoting the different species of wood. For economical reasons, each element of the stall was only depicted once in the drawing, and the left stall-divider and quadrant were omitted to reveal the intarsia designs. The stall-back features a highly refined portrait, which has been identified variously as a canon or a layman.<sup>97</sup> As at San Petronio, the contract drawing differs slightly from the finished product. Although four portrait intarsia panels feature on the stall-backs in Parma, none correspond exactly with the proposed design on the drawing.<sup>98</sup> Whereas in the contract drawing the quadrant had florid carving, in the completed stalls a Gothic arch appeared in this position, continuing a motif used on the Modena Cathedral substalls.

An unpublished contract drawing for the lost choir stalls of Santa Margarita in Bologna, roughly dated to the mid-sixteenth century, is in the Archivio di Stato in Bologna.<sup>99</sup> A note on the drawing shows that the stalls were commissioned to Alessandro di Giacomo Marculadi according to the design shown, suggesting the absence of a formal written document (Fig. 99).<sup>100</sup> Unlike the two drawings described above, this design depicts a section of the choir consisting of four upper and three substalls. The stalls are shown from the side to emphasise the elegant curve of the quadrant and hand-rest carving. Behind the first substall a curious shape could indicate a step or kneeler fixed to the foundation. The first upper stall on the left displays fluted ionic columns stall-dividers, whereas the other stalls have plain ionic pilasters. This inconsistency could have been an intentional method of differentiating the abbess' stall, or could indicate two different design options. However, as the annotation does not refer to an aesthetic decision, it is likely that the drawing indicated the final design. The Santa Margarita drawing is more sketchy than the two described above, and the artist's use of perspective is less convincing. Nonetheless, the

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ed., *Disegni del Rinascimento in Valpadana*, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi no. 87 (Florence: Leo. S. Olschki, 2001), pp. 81–84.

<sup>97</sup>Bagatin (2004), p. 264.

<sup>98</sup>The four panels show portraits of saints which have been identified as Hilary of Poitiers, patron protector of Parma, San Bernardo degli Uberti, cardinal and bishop of Parma, and the two evangelists Luke and Mark (or Matthew, since the inscription reads 'S.M'). Bagatin (2004), p. 298.

<sup>99</sup>ASB, Demaniale, 52/3919. The contract drawing was noted by Malaguzzi although no illustration or reference was provided. Francesco Malaguzzi, 'L'intaglio e la tarsia a Bologna nel Rinascimento', *Rassegna d'arte* 1, no. 1 (1901), p. 27.

<sup>100</sup>The annotation reads: 'Io alex° de iac° marchualdi prometto di far[e] al cuore delle suore di santa margaritta schondo al prepe[nti] disegno'. ASB, Demaniale, 52/3919.

inclusion of more stalls gives a more realistic impression of the finished choir.

All three pen and ink contract drawings depict the furniture in linear perspective, with light and dark expressed through darker washes. Their main intention was to describe all the decorative and functional parts of the stall, but unlike some drawings for sculptural projects or altarpieces, they did not bear any indication of scale.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the textual contracts themselves rarely referred to specific measurements. The contract drawings considered here depict single stalls or groups of stalls, again reflecting the written terms which rarely mention the overall plan or position of the choir.

Were contract drawings designed by the woodworkers themselves? Doubt has been expressed about the authorship of sculptural contract drawings, which could extend to stall drawings.<sup>102</sup> The notary's annotation on the San Petronio drawing did not clarify the authorship of the drawing: 'this is the design according to which master Agostino de Marchi da Crema, master of wood, must produce the seats of the choir of San Petronio'.<sup>103</sup> However, the technical detail conveyed by the drawings, such as the inclusion of hinges, suggests that they were completed by the woodworkers themselves. Depictions of seats in contemporary paintings generally do not show an advanced knowledge of wooden construction techniques, implying that painters rarely executed choir drawings. Moreover, the draftsmanship involved in the design and execution of intarsia panels show that certain woodworkers had impressive graphic skills. Knowledge of perspective was vital to furniture makers since their work involved conceiving shapes in three dimensions.<sup>104</sup>

Further drawings exist which relate to the design of intarsia panels. Rather than contract drawings, these are preparatory drawings, possibly designed by painters, for transformation into intarsia. A pen and ink drawing in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle shows the head of a young man turned three-quarters to the right, and has been

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<sup>101</sup> Pesenti notes that many contract drawings for altarpieces have annotations describing the measurements and materials of the proposed piece. Pesenti (2005), p. 170.

<sup>102</sup> Geddes argues that the dispute over the finished state of the marble high altarpiece of San Francesco in Bologna by Pierpaolo and Jacobello dalle Masegne (1388–92) could have arisen because the original contract drawing might have been executed by a different artist. Helen Geddes, 'Altarpieces and Contracts: The Marble High Altarpiece for S. Francesco, Bologna (1388–1392)', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 67 (2004), pp. 160, 181.

<sup>103</sup> Transcribed in Zucchini (1942), p. 162: 'hoc est designum secundum quod magister Augustinus quondam Marci de Crema magister lignaminis debet conficere sedilia in choro sancti Petronii'.

<sup>104</sup> As Simon Jervis points out, 'The scale and spatial complexity of the objects the furniture maker produced made the science of drawing correctly in perspective more necessary to him than to the practitioners of other decorative arts'. Simon Jervis, *Printed Furniture Designs before 1650* (Leeds: The Furniture History Society, 1974), p. 3.

identified by Thornton as a study for an intarsia panel (Fig. 100).<sup>105</sup> The face was divided up into different planes, some of which are described with rough cross-hatching. Although it does not correspond to an identified intarsia panel, it is likely that the demarcated areas on the drawing were intended to correspond to differently coloured woods. Another drawing which has been identified as a study for an intarsia panel shows a mathematical device, commonly portrayed from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>106</sup>

We have noted above that a painter was involved in the preparation of the *spalliera* panels for the choir of Monte Berico in Vicenza, and collaborations of this sort seem to be common.<sup>107</sup> In a famous example, the painter Lorenzo Lotto was selected to design intarsia cartoons for the choir of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo in a competition with three other artists in 1523.<sup>108</sup> Various painters were employed to provide cartoons for the intarsia panels executed by Fra Raffaele da Brescia for the choir of San Michele in Bosco in Bologna, which was started in 1514.<sup>109</sup> Among the artists cited in the accounts are the miniaturist Vincenzo da Genova and the painter Bartolomeo da Bagnacavallo who did the designs of saints Gregory and Petronio.<sup>110</sup> In 1514 the artist Amico Aspertini made an agreement with the monks of San Michele to produce designs on paper for the choir ‘in perspective’ for sixty *lire*.<sup>111</sup>

Designs for church furniture would sometimes be displayed in public, but whether contract drawings or more finished demonstration drawings were shown remains uncertain. In 1462, two model stalls were displayed in the Gattamalata Chapel in the Santo in Padua, together with a drawing of the stalls. This chapel was at the west end of the nave, so lay visitors could have had access to proposed designs for the new choir.<sup>112</sup> At

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<sup>105</sup>M. J. Thornton, ‘Tarsie: Design and Designers’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973). Popham and Wilde attributed the drawing to an anonymous north-Italian artist, and speculated that its unusual appearance is due to its being a design for stained glass. A. E. Popham and Johannes Wilde, *The Italian Drawings of the XV and XVI centuries in the collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle* (London: Phaidon Press, 1949), p. 179, cat. 34. I am grateful to Elena Greer of the Royal Collection for allowing me to view this drawing.

<sup>106</sup>*Design for intarsia*, pen and bistre. 250 x 205mm. The drawing featured at an exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1958 and was lent by Art Museum, Princeton University. *Decorative Arts of the Italian Renaissance. The Detroit Institute of Arts, November 18, 1958–January 4, 1959* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1958), p. 25, cat. 1.

<sup>107</sup>Dani (1965), pp. 19, 20.

<sup>108</sup>The other artists asked to supply sample cartoons were Andrea Previtali, Francesco Rosso di Pavia, and an anonymous artist from Cremona. Cortesi Bosco (1987), p. 19.

<sup>109</sup>Guido Zucchini, ‘San Michele in Bosco di Bologna’, *L’Archiginnasio* 38, no. 1–6 (1943).

<sup>110</sup>Zucchini (1943), pp. 34–35.

<sup>111</sup>Zucchini (1943), p. 34: ‘che si ha a fare di nuovo in prospettiva’.

<sup>112</sup>The chapel was founded in 1456 to fulfill the testament written in 1441 by Erasmo da Narni, called

Parma Cathedral, a drawing for the sacristy stalls was displayed in public, as noted in the contract with Bernardino Canozi in 1487.<sup>113</sup> Drawings for other extensive sculptural or architectural projects were also displayed, showing that such commissions were not undertaken in isolation, but were considered as public projects.<sup>114</sup>

## 2.4 Imitation clauses

In written contracts, craftsmen were often instructed to imitate an existing choir. Of the twenty-five documents I have analysed from the late fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries, sixteen have imitation or *modo et forma* clauses. Terms varied in specificity, ranging from general to detailed instructions referring to several different choir precincts.<sup>115</sup>

Most imitation clauses were vague. For instance, the Parma Cathedral contract stated that the stalls had to show the same height and beauty—‘*alteza et belleza*’—as the choir of Modena Cathedral.<sup>116</sup> In a similar undefined statement, the stalls in Cremona Cathedral had to have the same way and form—‘*modo et forma*’—as the choir in the church of Sant’Antonio in Padua.<sup>117</sup> The stalls in the convent church of St Catherine in Zadar had to be similar—‘*ad similitudinem*’—to some stalls completed by the same artist in the monastery of St Jerome on Ugljan.<sup>118</sup>

More specific replication clauses involved citing exceptions to the rule. In the contract for the stalls in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, the craftsmen were obliged to make the stalls the same height as those in the church of San Francesco Grande in the same city, except that

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Gattamelata. It was attached to the third bay of the south nave aisle. Gonzati (1852), pp. 52–53 (the chapel is labelled no. 10 on the plan on p. 12).

<sup>113</sup>Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, *Cristoforo da Lendinara* (Parma 1959), p. 103: ‘in la forma de li designi et in quella forma già dimostrata in publico’. The contract commissioning sacristy stalls from Bernardino Canozi is dated 10 September 1487.

<sup>114</sup>The drawing of the façade of Florence Cathedral by Francesco Talenti was attached to the wall in 1357: ‘Vogliamo che il di di S. Giovanni il disengiamiento della facciata così chol tabernacholo istea appichiato di fuori nella faccia, aciò che a tutti sia manifesto come de[v]e stare’. Florence, AOSMF, Ricordanze del Provveditore Filippo Marsili, quoted in Pesenti (2005), p. 63.

<sup>115</sup>The contract for the choir stalls of San Zaccaria in Venice, which refers to several different choirs, will be treated in the case study in Chapter Five.

<sup>116</sup>Fiocco (1913), p. 339: ‘Che dicti stalli debbiano essere de quella alteza et belleza del coro de la chiesa catedrale de modena’.

<sup>117</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82: ‘modo et forma quibus et prout constructi et fabricati sunt stalli seu sezuli vel sedes existentes in Ecclesia Sancti Antonii de Padua’.

<sup>118</sup>Petricioli (1972), pp. 126–27: ‘ad similitudinem illius chori quem dictus ser Simon fecit in monasterio sancti Jeronimi de Vgliano’. The Franciscan convent of St Jerome on Ugljan (an island near Zadar) was built between 1430 and 1452. Donal Cooper, ‘Gothic art and the Friars in Late Medieval Croatia 1213–1460’, in *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and Cultural Heritage* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2009), p. 82.

the first stall or cathedra should be larger.<sup>119</sup> Stalls in Santa Maria in Spilimbergo had to imitate those in Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice: an unusual case where both choirs still survive. The stalls had to be of the same form, quality and condition of those in the Frari, except that in Spilimbergo the two rows of stalls should replicate only the two upper rows in Venice.<sup>120</sup>

Imitation clauses could also specify decoration and iconography. In the choir contract for San Francesco in Pavia, the artists were instructed to make stalls similar to those in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, except that certain sculptures of angels should be replaced with flowers, a more decorative and perhaps more appropriate motif for the Franciscan church.<sup>121</sup> In the contract for the stalls in the Benedictine nunnery of Sant’Ulderico in Parma, the artist was instructed to make the furniture like that in San Francesco in the same city,<sup>122</sup> but instead of perspective intarsia he had to incorporate diverse and varied patterns.<sup>123</sup>

But how closely did the artists follow such stipulations? The poor survival rate of many documented choirs limits a thorough evaluation of *modo et forma* clauses. However, in some cases both the model and copy are at least partly extant. Stalls in the Frari in Venice and Santa Maria in Spilimbergo, both completed by the Cozzi workshop, are remarkably similar. The Spilimbergo stalls are almost a carbon copy of their Venetian counterparts; although a different carver worked on the half-length relief portraits of saints, and the range of intarsia scenes was increased. Likewise in the Canozzi choirs of Modena Cathedral and Parma Cathedral, despite variations in the carved stall-dividers and shape of the intarsia panels, the fundamental design of the stalls was not significantly different.<sup>124</sup> At

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<sup>119</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘Item quod magnitudo praedictorum stadiorum sit prout sunt stadia quae sunt in ecclesia S. Francisci fratrum minorum excepto primo stadio quod sit pro cathedra, quia illud debet esse maius secundum designatam portionem’. Founded in the thirteenth century, San Francesco Grande was destroyed between 1806–13 but had been situated quite close to Sant’Ambrogio. Fiorio (1985), pp. 57–59.

<sup>120</sup>Joppi (1887), pp. 110–11: ‘cuius forme, qualitatis et conditionis operis et magisterii est chorus ecclesie s. Marie de Venetiis que dicitur Cha grande, eo excepto quod ille chorus ecclesie s. Marie est et habet cathedras in tribus gradibus, istum autem chorum debet facere in duobus tantum gradibus cathedrarum, videlicet eiusdem forme et conditionis cuius cathedre primi et altioris gradus dicti chori s. Marie et cathedre secundi gradi’.

<sup>121</sup>See above, p. 72.

<sup>122</sup>Ronchini (1876), p. 314: ‘che ’l dicto magistro sia obligato a fare li stali a la fogia et facione de li stali de Sancto Francisco’.

<sup>123</sup>Ronchini (1876), p. 314: ‘excepto che le prospective; in loco de le quali elo debbia fare grupi de tarsie varii et diversi cum boni et perfecti dissigni, tali che empiano il loco dove andarano le prospective’. This contract will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>124</sup>At Parma, the carving of the upper stall elbows repeats the Gothic tracery of the lower stalls in Modena, and the intarsia panels measure 500mm (horizontal) x 470mm (vertical) compared to 500mm x 330mm at

San Francesco in Pavia, only the carved stall-backs are extant, which depict a variety of trees, plants, fountains and flowers in vases, with some accompanied by figures, putti and animals. The model for the choir—Sant’Ambrogio in Milan—was completed by different artists some thirteen years earlier but displays very similar stall-backs again showing trees and plants. The dimensions of the stall-backs are very close, perhaps suggesting that lost elements of the Pavia stalls were of a similar size to their Milanese counterparts.<sup>125</sup> Not enough examples survive to determine how precisely artists followed contractual imitation clauses, but the three examples here suggest a close relationship between model and copy.

Although members of the same religious or secular orders would be familiar with choir stalls in churches of the same order, they did not necessarily want to imitate them. On the contrary, out of the sixteen contracts with imitation clauses, only two refer to churches of the same religious order. The choir contract for Parma Cathedral refers to the stalls in another cathedral, in nearby Modena. The first contract for San Francesco in Ferrara referred to three choirs including two in Franciscan churches: the stalls had to be larger than those in Ferrara Cathedral; tracery on the stall-backs had to be similar to the choir of the d’Este chapel in San Francesco itself; and the canopy over the entrance to the choir had to be similar to one in San Francesco in Bologna.<sup>126</sup> In other contracts different religious orders are cited: the Benedictines of Sant’Ambrogio in Milan wanted stalls the same height as those in the Franciscan church of San Francesco; the canons of Cremona Cathedral wanted stalls like those in the Franciscan church of Sant’Antonio in Padua; the Benedictines of Sant’Andrea in Vercelli wanted stalls similar to those by the same artist in the Certosa in Asti. Visual analysis of extant stalls also show that stylistic influences crossed cultural and geographical boundaries.

Of the sixteen contracts with such clauses, eleven referred to churches in the same city while five cited churches in different cities, sometimes a substantial distance away. From Venice to Spilimbergo is some 123km, while the distance between Padua and Cremona is 180km. How patrons knew about choirs for different religious orders across northern

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Modena.

<sup>125</sup>The Milan stall-backs measure 440mm x 840mm, while the Pavia stall-backs measure 450mm x 860mm.

<sup>126</sup>Cittadella (1867), pp. 86–87: ‘et sint grossiores quantum pedes eorum episcopatus Ferrariae... et transfora sint quantum in frontispitio chori cappellae D. Marchionis, quae est in dicta ecclesia S. Francisci... item facere cappellum introitus dicti chori ad similitudinem cappelli chori ecclesiae S. Francisci civitatis Bononiae’.



Italy is open to speculation. Did clerics and friars visit impressive choir precincts? Or did craftsmen show sketches of contemporary choirs to potential patrons?

In some circumstances, woodworkers were instructed to visit the choirs they were required to imitate. The Donati brothers were told to visit the choir of Sant’Ambrogio in Milan ‘in order to observe all the aforesaid [conditions]’ for their choir in San Francesco in Pavia.<sup>127</sup> After being commissioned to construct of the choir in Sant’Antonino in Venice, master Giacomo was advised by the parish priest to view the stalls in San Giovanni in Bragora because they were ‘beautiful and practical’.<sup>128</sup> Of course, if the model choir was done by the same workshop, they could have exhibited drawings of recent commissions. Perhaps patrons chose artists precisely because they had seen or heard about their latest work. We know that contemporaries knew about and discussed new choir precincts as witnessed by the comments of the vicar of Cremona Cathedral (see Chapter One). Visitors took notice of new choir precincts and patrons wanted to imitate what was new and impressive, whether it was in a different religious house or in a different city. Choirs were expensive luxury objects which acted as status symbols and engendered a sense of competition between religious communities.

## 2.5 Position and number of stalls

As will be discussed in Chapter Four, most choirs of this period were placed in a rectilinear formation in front of the high altar and therefore were composed of an even number of stalls. The choir position was rarely mentioned in contracts although in the Parma Cathedral document, the choir had to be constructed so that it did not ‘pass the bases of the marble columns that stand around the choir’, which presumably had also encircled the old choir.<sup>129</sup> At Cremona Cathedral, the new choir was to be situated in the same location as the old choir: ‘in the place where at present are the old stalls or seats or chairs’.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 289: ‘Item etiam et cum pactis infrascriptis videlizet quod ipsi Magistri teneantur infra quindecim dies prestare idoneam fideiussionem versus dictos dominos Fratres in civitate Mediolani de observando predicta omnia.’

<sup>128</sup>In his evidence presented to the *Giustizieri Vecchi* on 7 October 1468, Marco recalled: ‘et Io rispuxi aldito maistro se vui volle veder bel choro ande a veder quel de s. zuane bragora perche quello e bello eutile’. Connell (1988), p. 286.

<sup>129</sup>Fiocco (1913), p. 339: ‘et feanli che [i stalli] non passano li bassate de collone di marmoro che stanno in torno al coro’.

<sup>130</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82: ‘in loco ubi presentialiter sunt alii stalli seu sezuli vel sedes veteres’.

In Tuscany, the choir of San Francesco in Borgo San Sepolcro was situated behind the high altar at least by the late fourteenth century, but San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna represents an early example in the northern region.<sup>131</sup> The *cappella maggiore* was extended in 1517 at the expense of patron Beata Elena dall'Oglio<sup>132</sup> and the following year Paolo del Sacha was commissioned to construct an odd number of stalls—thirty-nine—in order to follow the curve of the apse.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps because of these new choir arrangements, in the contract for San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma the location of the choir was made explicit. The stalls were to be placed ‘beneath the crossing of said church’, and were to have ‘an ornament which goes above said stalls . . . [and] above the doors . . . so that it holds from one pilaster to the other beneath the crossing’.<sup>134</sup>

Unless indicated on a lost drawing, contracts usually specified the number of stalls in the precinct. For instance, in Santa Maria in Spilimbergo twelve upper stalls had to constitute each range, while in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan twenty-eight upper stalls were contracted in total.<sup>135</sup> In the contract for St Mary the Great in Zadar, the artist was required to construct the same number of stalls as in the old choir, but sometimes the number of stalls was left to the judgement of the craftsman, depending on how many could fit into the space.<sup>136</sup> In the Zadar Cathedral contract, Matteo Moronzon was instructed to make ‘as many seats as can be placed’.<sup>137</sup> In the choir contract for Cremona Cathedral, there had to be forty stalls at the least and forty-two at the most.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, in the contract for the stalls of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, the number of upper stalls was roughly specified as ‘sixty or thereabouts’.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>131</sup>On 14 May 1378, Luca di Bernardo was commissioned to construct the choir in San Francesco in Borgo San Sepolcro ‘post altare maius’. The contract is in ASF, NA 16185 (notary Paolo di Ciuccio di Jacopo), ff. 93v–94v, transcribed in James R. Banker and Donal Cooper, ‘Appendix A of Documents to the Chapter by Cooper and Banker’, in *Sassetta: The Borgo San Sepolcro Altarpiece*, ed. by Machtelt Israëls (Florence and Leiden: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies and Primavera Press, 2009), doc. 4, p. 572.

<sup>132</sup>Maria Rita Fabbri, ‘Il coro intarsiato di San Giovanni in Monte’, *Il Carrobbio* 2 (1976), p. 145.

<sup>133</sup>Gurrieri and Gurrieri (1985), p. 43: ‘trigintanovem cum stalla seu sedes alta seu alte’.

<sup>134</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170: ‘sotto la cuba de dicta nostra ecclesia . . . lo ornamento qual andera sopra dicte sedie . . . sopra a le porte . . . ita che tenga da luno pilastro a laltro sotto a dicta cuba’.

<sup>135</sup>In the Spilimbergo contract of 4 February 1475, Marco Cozzi was contracted to make ‘unum chorum cum cathedris vigintiquatuor magnis in duobus gradibus sive duplis, videlicet duodecim pro quolibet latere’. Joppi (1887), p. 110. The Milanese stalls had to be ‘numero XXVIII superiora’. Biscaro (1905), p. 92.

<sup>136</sup>Magister Joannes had to make ‘tam magnarum quam parvarum pro illa summa et numero prout erunt’. Petricioli (1972), p. 131.

<sup>137</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 121: ‘tot sedes quot cadere [lit: to fall] poterint’.

<sup>138</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82: ‘numero quadraginta ad minus quo ad ipsos superiores et absque aliis inferioribus et usque in quadraginta duos ad plus’.

<sup>139</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170: ‘serano sedie 60 vel circa’.

In the majority of contracts, only the number of upper stalls was specified, because substalls were arranged with openings to give access to the upper row. For instance in the contract for San Francesco in Pavia, the artists had to make as many substalls as could be ‘distributed in compartments made of those lower stalls’.<sup>140</sup> Unusually, in the contract for the choir of the Santo in Padua, the number of lower stalls was specified but still open to change: ‘there should be fifty-two large [stalls], moreover thirty-eight small, or more or less as they fall into place’.<sup>141</sup>

The cost of substalls was often included in the price of the upper stalls. In the contract for San Vittore in Bologna, the cost of each stall was calculated ‘comprising those below with those above’.<sup>142</sup> Likewise, in the contract for Cremona Cathedral, the cost of one stall was ‘for each upper stall or chair or seat with the lower’.<sup>143</sup> This documentary evidence reveals that the overall number of seats was not of great importance to the church representatives and did not correspond to the exact size of the community. Rather, it was important that there *were* two rows of stalls and that there was sufficient access to the upper row. Some choirs had three rows of stalls, but unfortunately corresponding contracts do not survive which would indicate if the extra row cost significantly more.<sup>144</sup>

Some contracts requested that one stall be distinguished by its greater cost and more elaborate decoration. In the contract for Zadar Cathedral, the artist was instructed to produce ‘one seat for the archbishop set before the other seats’ at the aforesaid price—sixteen ducats—as the other stalls.<sup>145</sup> In the contract for Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, the artists were instructed to make a cathedra ‘on the right hand side’, which was to have distinctive decoration.<sup>146</sup> In the contract for the choir stalls of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, one ‘grand stall’ was to be built, presumably reserved for the prior of the Dominican convent.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: ‘cum aliis sediis inferioribus justa distributionem ad compartitum fiendum de ipsis sediis inferioribus’.

<sup>141</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25: ‘magni esse debeant quinquaginta duo, parvi vero XXXVIII vel plures seu pauciores prout cadent in loco’.

<sup>142</sup>Zucchini (1917), p. 26: ‘comprendendo quello desotto cum quel de sopra’.

<sup>143</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 83: ‘pro quolibet stallo seu sezulo vel sede superioribus cum inferioribus’.

<sup>144</sup>The Frari in Venice has 124 seats in three rows, and Ferrara Cathedral originally had 150 seats in three rows, which were reduced to 132 plus the cathedra in 1715. Frisoni (1982), p. 547.

<sup>145</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 121: ‘Item facere unam sedem Archiepiscopalem avanticatam aliis sedibus pro dicto precio ducatorum XVI auri’.

<sup>146</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 92: ‘a manu dextra’.

<sup>147</sup>ASV, Notai busta 24, fol. 70v: ‘una quaque sedium maiorum’.

## 2.6 Practical and financial arrangements

The time frame allocated for choir projects varied considerably, depending on several factors including the size of the workshop. Some cheaper furniture took less time to complete, for example, the simply constructed choir precinct at San Vittore in Bologna had a deadline of only eight months. However, the choir of Zadar Cathedral had to be completed in only eighteen months, yet cost significantly more. The choir actually took over three decades to complete because the carver, Matteo Moronzon, accepted further substantial commissions from the cathedral, including a large freestanding crucifix and fourteen large figures for above the choir screen.<sup>148</sup>

Two of the most expensive documented choir precincts were in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma and the Santo in Padua. Marcantonio Zucchi was obliged to finish the Parma choir within six years,<sup>149</sup> while the Canozi brothers in Padua were given a flexible time frame of between four and eight years.<sup>150</sup> These expensive choirs also had considerably more seats than cheaper precincts, partly explaining their lengthy execution. Choirs of average size had to be completed within one to three years, sometimes to coincide with a particular festival in the liturgical year. In the second contract for San Francesco in Ferrara, Arduino da Baiso was instructed to complete the choir by the Carnevale festival of the following year,<sup>151</sup> while the choir of Parma Cathedral had to be completed in two years and by Michaelmas, when the choir would be inaugurated.<sup>152</sup>

The cost of choir stalls was enumerated either as a total cost or as a unit price. In contracts, monetary amounts would have been a measure of value in money of account, later converted to actual coinage for payment to craftsmen.<sup>153</sup> The Canozi brothers were promised thirty-one ducats for each stall (comprising upper and lower) in the Santo in Padua, whereas the craftsmen of the Sant'Ambrogio in Milan choir were to be credited with nine hundred *lire imperiali* in total. Prices per stall can be roughly converted from

<sup>148</sup>Matteo Moronzon completed the choir of Zadar Cathedral between 1418 and 1451. He was commissioned to carve the crucifix and figures for the cathedral screen on 21 May 1426. Petricioli (1972), p. 55.

<sup>149</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 171: 'in termino de anni sei'.

<sup>150</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25: 'quod laborerium facere promiserunt usque ad quatuor annos ad minus vel in pluribus annis usque ad octo ad plus secundum voluntatem tunc Deputatorum'.

<sup>151</sup>Franceschini (1993), vol. 1, p. 145: 'hinc ad festum carnisprivii proxime venturum.'

<sup>152</sup>Fiocco (1913), p. 339: 'in fra due ani per essere terminati ala festa de san michielle per essere nel dì inaugura'.

<sup>153</sup>Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1986), p. xx.

local currencies and compared to show differences in value.<sup>154</sup> Costs ranged from just over three bolognino d'oro (similar in weight to Venetian ducats) for each simple Gothic stall in San Vittore in Bologna, to thirty-one ducats for each stall in the Santo in Padua, highly decorated with intarsia and micro-architecture.<sup>155</sup>

No clear correlation arises between prices and the woodworking techniques of carving and intarsia. At sixteen ducats per stall, the carved stalls of Zadar Cathedral cost more than the intarsia stalls of San Zaccaria in Venice, which cost ten ducats each. However, two choirs with carved decoration were not as expensive: the choir of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan which cost the equivalent of just under eight ducats per stall, and the stalls at San Francesco in Pavia which cost just under six ducats each.<sup>156</sup> The most expensive stalls featured intarsia panels: just over eighteen ducats per stall in Santa Maria in Spilimbergo, thirty-one ducats per stall in the Santo, and thirty ducats per stall in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma.<sup>157</sup> Intarsia panels were only one element which made these stalls so expensive. Pierantonio degli Abati was only contracted to make the intarsia panels or *spalliere* for the choir of Monte Berico in Vicenza, for which he was paid the modest sum of four and a half ducats per panel.<sup>158</sup> To resolve this complex issue more payment records are needed to accurately assess the relative costs of different forms of decoration.

The total cost of choirs could be extremely high, often exceeding amounts paid for high altarpieces. The choir of San Francesco in Pavia cost 212 ducats in 1484, while a carved and painted high altarpiece for Santa Maria Gualtieri in the same city cost 84.5 ducats in 1499.<sup>159</sup> Cima da Conegliano's high altarpiece depicting *The Baptism of Christ* for San Giovanni in Bragora in Venice cost 137 ducats in 1492, compared to the 490 ducats spent

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<sup>154</sup>Conversions from Spufford (1986).

<sup>155</sup>The stalls in San Vittore cost 'ciascuno l. vi. s. x', which at a rate of 40 soldi (in 1422–27), was equivalent to 3.25 bolognino d'oro. Spufford (1986), p. 78.

<sup>156</sup>The choir at Milan cost 900 *lire imperiali* in total, which can be converted to 219.5 ducats (at an exchange rate of 82 *soldi imperiali* in 1467–74, from Spufford (1986) p. 102) so 7.8 ducats for each of the 28 stalls. The stalls in Pavia cost 212 ducats, divided by 36 stalls, makes approximately 5.9 ducats per stall. The Pavia contract requested 17 stalls, but this must have been intended per range, since 28 stall-backs survive today.

<sup>157</sup>The choir in Spilimbergo cost 'ducatorum quadringentorum triginta septem auri' in total, which divided by 24 stalls makes 18.2 ducats per stall. Joppi (1887), p. 110. The stalls in the Santo in Padua cost 'ducatos triginta unum pro quolibet stallo'. Sartori (1961), p. 25. The stalls in San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma cost 'ducati trenta de oro largi per ciascuna sedia'. Adorni (1979), p. 171.

<sup>158</sup>Dani (1965), p. 19: 'ducatos quatuor auri cum dimidio'.

<sup>159</sup>The altarpiece was contracted to the gilder Giovanni Siro Cattaneo da Brignano and the painter Vincenzo Foppa on 30 October 1499. O'Malley (2005), pp. 54–55, 60, 263.

on the San Zaccaria choir stalls, also in the lagoon city.<sup>160</sup> Although some paintings cost significantly more, choirs were certainly expensive additions to the church fabric.<sup>161</sup>

Choir contracts often explained a system of payment in several installments. An advance payment or ‘arra’ was sometimes made, enabling the artist to buy the provisions and raw materials needed to begin work. During the project, craftsmen were either paid in pre-arranged installments or sporadically. After an initial payment of 200 ducats, the Canozi brothers were to be paid ‘from time to time’ for the choir of the Santo in Padua.<sup>162</sup> In the contract for Santa Maria in Spilimbergo, Marco Cozzi agreed to receive fifty ducats as an advance payment, with the rest being paid ‘according to the rate at which he works and finishes’.<sup>163</sup> A proportion could be retained until the completion of the work, as in the Spilimbergo contract: ‘one hundred ducats which Ettore and his Consorts [representatives of the church] can retain until the completion and end of said work’.<sup>164</sup> A more detailed timetable of payments was arranged in the contract for Sant’Ambrogio in Milan. Two hundred *lire imperiali* would be paid eight days after the signing of the contract, followed by one hundred one month after the start of work, a further amount (illegible in the document) two months later, one hundred in September 1470, one hundred at Christmas 1471, with the rest being paid at the completion of work, except for one hundred *lire* which would be paid three months after completion.<sup>165</sup>

As in other artistic contracts, at the end of the document a monetary penalty for the breaking of conditions was often specified in choir documents. Fines ranged between twenty-five and one hundred ducats, sometimes including double the amount of damages incurred. In the contract for the choir of San Francesco in Pavia, any deficiencies found

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<sup>160</sup>Payments are dated 8 December 1492. O’Malley (2005), pp. 54–55, 262.

<sup>161</sup>While the stalls in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan cost 900 *lire imperiali*, the Confraternity of the Conception in San Francesco in Milan paid Leonardo da Vinci and the de Predis brothers 1030 *lire imperiali* for the painting and gilding of their altarpiece and Giacomo del Maino 710 *lire imperiali* for its carving. Glasser (1965), p. 173.

<sup>162</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25: ‘de tempore in tempus, incipiendo sibi dare ducatos ducentos in principio mensis iulii proxime futuri’.

<sup>163</sup>Joppi (1887), p. 111: ‘secundum ratam eius quod laboraverint et perfecerint’.

<sup>164</sup>Joppi (1887), p. 110: ‘ducatos centum quos prefati d. Hector et eius consortes possint retinere usque ad perfectionem et complementum dicti operis’.

<sup>165</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘primo libras ducentum imperialium hind ad dies octo proxime futuros, libras centum imperialium post mensem a die coepti operis per ipsos tres suprascriptos et libras (?) inde ad duos menses post secundum terminum, et libras centum ad calendas septembris proxime futuri et libras centum ad festum nativitatis anni 1471 et residuum in fine operis completi . . . hoc excepto quod de libris centum fiat credentia per menses tres post finem operis’.

one year after the completion of the choir had to be remade at the artists' expense.<sup>166</sup> In the Cremona Cathedral contract, the artist was forewarned that the choir would be judged by 'good men, experts in such similar things'.<sup>167</sup> At San Vittore in Bologna, the artists were advised that if the choir was considered unsatisfactory by other masters, they must improve it at their own expense.<sup>168</sup>

## 2.7 Provisions of wood and domestic arrangements

Contracts often stipulated which party were obliged to provide raw materials, such as wood, tools and glue. In most cases, it was the artist's responsibility to provide all necessary provisions, although they were sometimes given an advance payment in order to purchase them. Nineteen of the contracts considered here mention the purchase of raw material: in twelve contracts it was the responsibility of the artist, in six cases the church or convent had to provide, and in one case (Santa Maria in Spilimbergo) the cost was divided between the two parties.<sup>169</sup>

When the craftsman was obliged to provide raw materials, usually the phrase 'eius sumptibus et expensis' was used, with the materials themselves sometimes named. For example, in the contract for San Francesco in Pavia, the Donati brothers had to supply wood, nails, and everything else necessary for the building of the choir.<sup>170</sup> There was no correlation between the size or religious order of the churches which provided raw materials: San Vittore in Bologna, the Santo in Padua, Parma Cathedral, Monte Berico in Vicenza and San Pietro in Modena all agreed to deliver provisions. At San Vittore in Bologna, the church was to provide the artists with wood, tools, cheese for glue and candles for night

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<sup>166</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 289: 'Item si contigerit infra unum annum post dictam constructionem in ipso coro demonstrare seu habere aliquod manchamentum magistrerii teneantur ipsi magistri ad suplandum et reaptandum ipsum manchamentum omnibus ipsorum magistrorum expensis.'

<sup>167</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 83: 'ad laudem cuiuslibet boni viri in talibus et similibus experti'.

<sup>168</sup>Zucchini (1917), p. 27: 'item chel preditto choro non fosse laudato e comendato per buoni maestri de quel mestieri che loro siano obligati a tutte loro spexe de doverlo comendare e redurlo in bona forma se alcuno fallo o mancamento li serà.'

<sup>169</sup>Joppi (1887), p. 111: 'quod dictus d. Hector et Consortes antedicti teneantur et debeant dare omnia lignamina grossa prout sunt tabule et trabes ad dictum chorum pertinentia et omnia ferramenta dicto choro pertinentia. Omnia vero alia lignamina minuta et ad tarsiam pertinentia et generaliter omnia et singular ad dictum Chorum... teneatur et debeat dare et ponere in dicto opere ipse m.r Marcus omnibus suis sumptibus et expensis.'

<sup>170</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: 'omnibus eorum sumptibus et expensis tam respectu assidum lignaminus clovorum et aliorum quorumcumque necessariorum per ipsius cori'.

work.<sup>171</sup>

Some contracts also specified the type or quality of the wood. Generic terms, such as ‘de bono lignamine’ in the Santo contract, were common.<sup>172</sup> Sometimes the wood had to be ‘fine and seasoned’ as in the contract for Zadar Cathedral, or ‘well-dried’ as in the Cremona Cathedral contract.<sup>173</sup> The reuse of wood was generally not allowed, as shown by the contract for the choir of San Francesco in Pavia which forbade the employment of ‘non-remade’ wood.<sup>174</sup> However, in the second contract for St Mary the Great in Zadar, the artist was allowed to reuse larch from the old choir if it was good and sufficient.<sup>175</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, choir contracts did not generally contain terms regarding the future upkeep of the wood, as occasionally specified in altarpiece contracts. An example is the contract with Leonardo da Vinci and the de Predis brothers for the ancona of the Confraternity of the Conception in San Francesco in Milan, which had to be maintained for ten years.<sup>176</sup>

Most stalls considered here were constructed from walnut, although several contracts stipulated the use of different woods for particular parts of the stalls. The stalls in San Francesco in Pavia had to be made from walnut except the floor or foundation of the stalls which could be constructed in poplar.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, in the Sant’Ambrogio in Milan contract, poplar planks were requested ‘under the feet’ of all the stalls.<sup>178</sup> The Cremona Cathedral contract stated that the stalls had to be constructed from walnut, except for the ‘hidden’ or non-visible parts, which could be poplar.<sup>179</sup> Evidently the aesthetic appearance of walnut was preferred to poplar, and all the exposed wood had to be the same quality.

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<sup>171</sup>Zucchini (1917), pp. 26–27: ‘che nui dobbiamo provedere e pagare tutto el legname el feramento che gli sera di bisogno el formazzo per la colla... item sel fosse de bisogno che li sia data candeale quando lavorasseno la sera... item che noi facciamo portare lo legname a san victore’.

<sup>172</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25.

<sup>173</sup>In the Zadar Cathedral contract of 23 July 1418, the choir stalls must be made from ‘de bono sano pulcro et sufficienti ac sasonato [stagionato] lignamine’. Petricioli (1972), p. 121. The wood for the Cremona Cathedral stalls had to be ‘bene siccis’. Bonetti (1919), p. 82.

<sup>174</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: ‘de bonis assidibus non refixis’.

<sup>175</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 132: ‘omnia lignamina de larese que sunt in presentiarum illic in huiusmodi coro veteri destruendo idem magister Joannes ponere possit in dicto opere fiendo ut premissum est si sunt bona et sufficiencia ad laborandum’.

<sup>176</sup>Glasser (1965), p. 339: ‘laudabile[m] p[er] annos decem ad minus’. The contract for the polychromy, gilding and painting of the wooden ancona with Leonardo da Vinci, Ambrogio de Predis and Evangelista da Predis is dated 25 April 1483.

<sup>177</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: ‘de bonis assidibus nucis aride et finate... solum seu fondum dicti cori de bonis assidibus pubie’. Wilmering states that poplar, along with elm, chestnut, larch and fir, was commonly used for construction purposes. Wilmering (1999), p. 22.

<sup>178</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘et ponatur assides sub pedibus in omnibus stadiis pobyē’.

<sup>179</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 82: ‘omnia alia lignamina latentia et seu non apparentia sint et esse debeant de bonis lignaminibus albare’.



Walnut, oak, chestnut and poplar were mentioned in the contract for the stalls of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma in 1512. Good walnut had to be used for most elements, but the steps were to be of oak, and the foundation chestnut or poplar.<sup>180</sup> In the contracts studied here, the different woods needed for intarsia panels were not specified, except in the Spilimbergo contract, where Marco Cozzi had to provide the woods ‘relating to intarsia’.<sup>181</sup> Technical analyses of the Venetian stalls in San Zaccaria and the Frari will show that specifications such as these on the application of different materials were indeed followed.

Requests for different woods to form hidden parts or functional aspects reveals a strict material hierarchy. Factors included the practical limitations of the woods (long planks cannot be obtained from walnut) and economic considerations, since poplar, oak and chestnut were less expensive than walnut. Walnut was frequently used due to its abundance in Italy, whereas oak was more commonly employed for north-European church furniture.<sup>182</sup> In Venice especially, a strict hierarchy of woods was imposed, which were produced in commercial forests on the *terraferma* or imported from Istria.<sup>183</sup> Connell has shown that larch, fir and oak were used by house carpenters and ship builders in fifteenth-century Venice while domestic furniture could employ combinations of fir, walnut or cypress wood.<sup>184</sup>

Some contracts dictated the domestic arrangements of craftsmen. Matteo Moronzon was allocated a house where he could stay for the duration of his work in Zadar Cathedral ‘with his family’.<sup>185</sup> In the Santo contract, Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozi were provided with a place to work within the convent and enough rooms and beds needed for themselves and

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<sup>180</sup>Adorni (1979), p. 170: ‘tutto sia de noce bela et bona et ben secha, excepto che li scatoni siano de rove et le asse dove se tenirano susa li pedi serano de castanea aut de piopa’.

<sup>181</sup>See footnote on page 87: ‘ad tarsiam pertinentia’.

<sup>182</sup>Bagatin (2004), p. 229. For the materials of English stalls, see Charles Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls 1200–1400* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987), p. 63.

<sup>183</sup>Connell (1988), pp. 160–61. Most of the forests on the *terraferma* were fir and beech. Wood was judged suitable for different purposes such as construction or fuel and could then only be used for those purposes. Antonio Lazzarini, ‘Le vie del legno per Venezia: mercato, territorio, confini’, in *Comunità e questioni di confini in Italia settentrionale (XVI–XIX sec.)* Ed. by Mauro Ambrosoli and Furio Bianco (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2007), p. 100. Appuhn has analysed the hierarchy of woods in the Venetian economy; a law passed in 1350 legislated that all good oak should be offered to the Arsenal first. Below oak was beech which was used for oars. In 1476 a new series of laws further regulated forest use. Karl Appuhn, ‘Inventing Nature: Forests, Forestry, and State Power in Renaissance Venice’, *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 4 (December 2000), pp. 867–68, 871–73.

<sup>184</sup>Connell (1988), pp. 159–60.

<sup>185</sup>Petricioli (1972), p. 121: ‘Nec non eidem dare et consignare domum canonicam in qua dictus magister possit stare et habitare ad laborandum dictum opus cum sua familia.’

their apprentices.<sup>186</sup> Craftsmen at San Vittore in Bologna were not given accommodation but their expenses were paid during the working day, when they had to follow the ways of the convent.<sup>187</sup> A similar clause was stipulated in the contract for the stall-backs of Monte Berico in Vicenza, in which Pierantonio degli Abati had to ‘live just as the friars of said convent’.<sup>188</sup> Sometimes the artists’ victual needs were also catered for, as in the contract for the choir of San Francesco in Pavia, in which the two artists were given ‘six barrels of wine’ as well as accommodation in the convent.<sup>189</sup> Similarly, the friars of San Francesco in Cremona provided the artists Paolo de Sacha and Cristoforo de Venetiis with enough to drink while they were working on the choir.<sup>190</sup>

## 2.8 Lecterns and other church furniture

Some contracts requested the construction of additional items of liturgical furniture, most commonly lecterns: large lecterns for the centre of the choir precinct, and smaller lecterns attached to the stall desks.<sup>191</sup>

The substalls in Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua had to be furnished with ‘four lecterns, namely with two lecterns either side’ similar to those in the Dominican church of Sant’Agostino in Padua.<sup>192</sup> Four lecterns, presumably two situated on each range, were mentioned in documents from St Francis in Zadar.<sup>193</sup> Both types were requested in the contract for the choir of the Santo in Padua: ‘[the artists] must make four small lecterns and one large one in the centre of the choir, worked with perspective intarsia, appropriate and decorated and in harmony with the choir itself’.<sup>194</sup> Similarly, each range

<sup>186</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25: ‘item dare praedictis magistris locum in dicto conventu in quo possint laborare et tot cameras fulcitas lectis quot sufficient ad habitationem suorum discipulorum et ipsorum magistrorum’.

<sup>187</sup>During the day the artists would work at San Giovanni in Monte (on which San Vittore was dependent), and in the evening they were to return to their dwelling: ‘mentre che lavorarano qui in san zohanne li dobbiamo fare le spexe el dì e la sera se ne vano a lor posta’. A further stipulation is that ‘item che faciano la nostra vita’. Zucchini (1917), p. 26.

<sup>188</sup>Dani (1965), p. 19: ‘prout vivunt fratres dicti conventus’.

<sup>189</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 289: ‘teneantur dicti D. Fratres dare habitationem dictis magistris tempore dicte constructionis in dicto conventu cameratas duas cum uno matracio et uno lecto et sua copertura et brentas sex vini’.

<sup>190</sup>Courajod (1885), p. 58: ‘che detti frati siano obligati a dar da beber a detti magistri et a lor lavorenti’.

<sup>191</sup>For a discussion of existing lecterns, see Chapter Three.

<sup>192</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 23: ‘cum quatuor letorilibus, videlicet cum duobus letorilibus pro quolibet latere, destaiatis et laboratis dictis secolis et lettorilibus ad formam et tayum secollorum Fratrum Praedicatorum de S. Augustino de Padua’.

<sup>193</sup>In a document dated 12 August 1395, Master Jacobus representing his brother Johannis stated that he had received payment for ‘iiiior capitibus et iiiior lectorinis et aliis sedilibus’. Petricioli (1972), p. 119.

<sup>194</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 25: ‘Item debeant facere quatuor lectorilia parva et unum magnum in medio ipsius

in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan was to receive two small lecterns, together with a large central lectern decorated with intarsia on the uppermost parts, probably indicating the desk.<sup>195</sup> In the contract for San Francesco in Pavia, three lecterns were requested which had to be positioned according to the needs of the friars and a large central lectern of the same dimensions as its predecessor.<sup>196</sup>

Other items of church furniture mentioned in contracts included benches and doors. In the contract for the Cremona Cathedral choir, the artists were requested to make a bench of good walnut with intarsia decoration, to be situated on the right side of the choir in the place of the old bench.<sup>197</sup> The same contract also requested a door, presumably to the choir, which had to be at least three *braccia* in width and feature intarsia decoration.<sup>198</sup> Most choir doors have not survived but some rare examples exist in San Vittore in Bologna, contemporary with the choir stalls of 1424 (Fig. 103).

## 2.9 Litigation and appraisals

Contracts were only the first stage in the legal relationship between artist and patron. Litigation proceedings between artists and patrons revealed problems which could arise after the initial agreement, as well as providing further insights into terminology, prices, and construction processes. Disputes could arise at any point during the commission: at the start of work as at Cremona Cathedral; during the project as at Santo Stefano in Venice; and towards completion in the case of Sant’Antonino in Venice.

A series of documents regarding the choir of Cremona Cathedral describe a dispute which arose among the church authorities about which craftsmen should be employed to construct the choir.<sup>199</sup> The choir was commissioned by the Massari della Fabbrica del

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chori, laborata cum tarsiis prospectivis, congruentia et condecencia ac respondentia ipsi choro’.

<sup>195</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 93: ‘et fiant pro singula parte cori ecclesia duo lectorili parvi... Item fiat lectorille unum magnum ponendum in medio chori ecclesiae praedictae cum scholtura tersiae circhum circha coronam desuper ita quod sit pulchrum et laudabile’.

<sup>196</sup>Maiocchi (1937), vol. 1, p. 288: ‘et cum tribus lecturinis infixis ubi placuerit ipsis Dominis Fratribus... facere teneantur lecturinum in medio dicti cori lactitudinis et longitudinis prout lecturinus vetus de bonis assidibus nucis cum suis interfracturis et intaliis’.

<sup>197</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 84: ‘unam pulchram bancham armatam de bono lignamine nucis bene at laudabiliter laboratam ad tarsiam cum suo capzelo... a manu dextra penes sedem Episcopalem ibidem existentem loco alterius banche veteris presencialiter ibidem existentis’.

<sup>198</sup>Puerari (1967), p. 139: ‘unum portabilem longitudinis brachiorum trium ad minus cum sua armatura laboratum ad tarsiam ac de bono lignamine nucis ut supra’. Three *braccia* measured 1.78m, so this probably referred to the width. Martini (1976), p. 182.

<sup>199</sup>The documents are compiled in Bonetti (1919).

Duomo (who were responsible for the fabric of the cathedral) and canons of the cathedral on 5 June 1483 to the artist Giovanni Maria Platina, from Mantua. On 9 June of the same year, Platina received his first payment from the cathedral.<sup>200</sup> However, the following year the Massari, following a change in their personnel, annulled the original contract and commissioned two different artists, Tommaso del Sacha and Pantaleone de Marchi, to build the choir instead of Platina.<sup>201</sup>

In a revised contract dated 4 February 1484, the two new artists offered to construct, at a reduced rate and within a shortened timespan of three years, superior furniture as demonstrated in their sample stall.<sup>202</sup> In addition, as opposed to the foreigner Platina, the two artists were local to Cremona. The Massari justified their decision by claiming that Platina had not provided a sample stall, whereas the two local artists had displayed a beautiful one. On 12 February of the same year, the two new artists received 300 *lire* from the Massari, while the canons insisted that the new contract was illegal.<sup>203</sup> Tommaso del Sacha appealed to the Duke of Milan, whose judgement favoured Platina, the original employee.<sup>204</sup> On 12 November 1484, Tommaso and Pantaleone were released from their illegal contract, and on 10 November 1485, Platina signed a definitive new contract with the cathedral.<sup>205</sup> The canons had attested that if the choir was contracted to other workers they would not make their financial contribution, and moreover that Platina's work was of a higher quality.<sup>206</sup>

The Cremona Cathedral affair highlights problems resulting from the involvement of two administrative bodies in the commissioning process. Both the Massari and the canons contributed financially, so both groups felt that they had the right to choose which artists to employ. The documents also show the sense of competition between artists for important choir commissions. The two Cremonese woodworkers evidently made a speculative approach

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<sup>200</sup>He received 75 *lire imperiali* from the Massari and 25 *lire imperiali* from the canons. Bonetti (1919), p. 19.

<sup>201</sup>The new members of the Massari were Cacino Sommi, Giacomo Trecchi and Giovanni Marco Zucchi. Bonetti (1919), p. 20.

<sup>202</sup>The two new artists were to be paid 48 *lire imperiali* for each stall, as opposed to the 60 per stall which Platina charged. Bonetti (1919), p. 20.

<sup>203</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 21.

<sup>204</sup>The Duke employed Pietro Landriano to investigate the case, who wrote that 'a nui pare che la deliberazione facta al magistro Mantuano [Platina] sia facta ad ornamento et ulilità d'epsa chiesa'. Bonetti (1919), p. 22.

<sup>205</sup>The Massari consisted of the new members Ambrogio de Fogliatis, Giovanni Pietro de Mainoldi and Lombardino de Persichello. Bonetti (1919), pp. 22–23.

<sup>206</sup>Bonetti (1919), p. 24.

to the Massari and had made a sample stall out of their own expense. Choir commissions were lucrative and could last several years, providing artists with security and a regular income.

A document drawn up on 27 February 1481 during the construction of the choir of Santo Stefano in Venice resolved a dispute between the procurator of the convent, Michele de Lezze (grandson of the original patron, Luca da Lezze), and the carver or *incissor* Leonardo Scalamanzo.<sup>207</sup> In the presence of witnesses and arbiters, it was stated that the choir had been appraised by carvers chosen by the arbitors on 6 November 1480.<sup>208</sup> As discussed above, contracts could warn of future appraisals, but this document shows that an estimation could be made during its construction. Evidently the choir was judged unsatisfactory, and the rest of the document sets out the sentence that was passed by the procurators of San Marco which saw the parting of artist and patron.

Michele was obliged to pay Leonardo fifty-two ducats and four *grossi* in three installments, which constituted the remainder owed to the artist.<sup>209</sup> In return Leonardo had to deliver by Easter of the same year various parts of the stalls which were either completed or partially completed. The first item, ‘master Lunardo is bound to deliver as completed: two large foliage that are supposed to start from the *teste* [of the choir] which are not delivered yet’ meaning the carved stall-ends.<sup>210</sup> The rest of the pieces the artist had ‘in his hand’, and constituted two panels or *spalliere* for the upper stalls; one finished pilaster for the first seats; one half-finished pilaster; ten columns already started; two small panels or *spalliere* for under the arms (seat-backs); one pierced foliage panel for under the arms (quadrant); forty-two pieces of intarsia frieze, of which thirty-three were finished, the others already begun; and all the other pieces that had been prepared.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup>The document can be found in ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, busta 124 (Francesco Marioni), and is transcribed in F. Stefani, ‘Il vero autore de’ sedili del coro di S. Stefano a Venezia’, *Archivio Veneto, Nuova Serie* 29, no. 1 (1885), pp. 194–196. Schulz has dated the initial contract (which no longer survives) to between 24 June 1474, when Luca was elected Procuratore di San Marco, and his death on 9 February 1476. Markham Schulz (2008), p. 658.

<sup>208</sup>Another appraisal had been made on 22 January 1481 at the request of Michele da Lezze. Markham Schulz (2008), p. 658.

<sup>209</sup>Michele was to pay Leonardo 22 ducats and 4 *grossi* immediately, 20 ducats at Easter and the remainder at Ascension. Markham Schulz (2008), pp. 658–59.

<sup>210</sup>Stefani (1885), p. 196: ‘mistro Lunardo sia obligado a dar fornite: do foie grande che sono comenzate zoe queste dale teste le quale non sono fornite’.

<sup>211</sup>Stefani (1885), p. 196: ‘zoe do spalieri facte le figure de quelle de sopra; uno pilero fornido de quelli de le prime sedie; uno pilero mezo facto; 10 collonele comenzate; do spalieri pichole de quelle va sotto li brazali; una foia segada intorno che va sotto li brazali; 42 pezi de frixi de tarsia forniti, deli quali ge ne 33 integri, li altri comenzati a segare; et tuti le altri pezi sono aparechiati per el dicto lavor seccundo

This list of pieces provides valuable insights into the working practices of stall manufacturers. Leonardo was not requested to provide a certain number of finished stalls, but rather the constituent parts that were put together to make the choir. Stalls were made of prefabricated sections—intarsia panels, friezes and carvings—that were eventually united with more utilitarian elements such as the foundation and seats themselves. This document shows that these different sections were being constructed at the same time: intarsia panels, columns, and carving were ready to be handed over. Although not mentioned in the document, Leonardo would probably have had a workshop and apprentices who would be working on different aspects of the woodwork. As Schulz has recently discovered, Scalamanzo appealed to the *Giudici del mobile* to obtain full payment for the work, further exemplifying the unpleasantness of the situation.<sup>212</sup> The Santo Stefano litigation shows that work could be halted by the patron during the choir construction if the work was not considered satisfactory. After Scalamanzo delivered the items listed above, work could have been continued by the workshop of Marco Cozzi, whose name appears on the stalls together with the date 1488.

As we have seen, choir contracts could refer to drawings which had to be reproduced faithfully in the finished stalls. Disagreements could arise when the design was not followed accurately. A dispute over the design of the choir in Sant'Antonino in Venice, between the woodworker Giacomo and patron Biagio de' Cesani, was examined at the court of the *Giustizieri Vecchi* in 1468.<sup>213</sup> The court heard from Marco Ricardo, priest of Sant'Antonino, who described the circumstances of the original commission between the patron Francesco (father of Biagio) and the artist Giacomo, and confirmed that he had been given a paper design for safekeeping.<sup>214</sup> Three woodworkers appraised the choir and judged that master

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che ne ha mostrato a nui'. Schulz noted that five payments from Michele da Lezze to Scalamanzo were recorded. Markham Schulz (2008), p. 659. Battaglia (1961–2002), vol. 13, p. 476: 'Pilière... pilastro polistilo, caratteristico dell'architettura romanica e gotica'.

<sup>212</sup>Scalamanzo appealed on 13 November 1481 to the *Giudici del mobile*, who instructed Michele to pay the remainder of 20 ducats and 12 *grossi*, with non-compliance meaning he would have to pay 42 ducats and 4 *grossi* instead. The whole affair was settled on 4 July 1482 when Alvise, Scalamanzo's stepson and proxy, confirmed that Michele da Lezze had settled his account in accordance with the sentence of the *Giudici*. Markham Schulz (2008), p. 659.

<sup>213</sup>The proceedings are transcribed in Connell (1988), pp. 286–288.

<sup>214</sup>Marco Ricardo related his evidence to the *Giustizieri Vecchi* on 7 October 1468. He said that Francesco de' Cesani had engaged Master Giacomo, to whom Marco had recommended studying the choir in San Giovanni in Bragora since it was so beautiful. A few days later the master came back with a design: 'vene eldito maistro e porto una mostra decarta'. After the price was negotiated, the design was given to Marco: 'Eldito ser francesco me de ladita mostra edisse queste parolle saluella perche labiamo quando la bisogniera'. Connell (1988), pp. 286–87.

Giacomo had not reproduced the design accurately.<sup>215</sup> It seems that master Giacomo had made the choir stalls in a more elaborate style than had been agreed in the design possibly in order to claim a higher price. Biagio maintained that the artist had not obtained permission to change the design, and that he was not willing to pay more than had been originally decided.<sup>216</sup> Giacomo was charged damages of twenty-three *lire* and fourteen *soldi* and was obliged to complete the choir stalls in the manner originally intended.<sup>217</sup>

This Venetian case shows the importance of accurately reproducing the original contract drawing, with non-compliance resulting in legal action. As we have observed in surviving stalls, sometimes the completed furniture differed from the drawing or written description in the contract. Presumably, unlike master Giacomo, those artists obtained special permission from the church to make such alterations.

The three disputes examined here show how closely some patrons followed the progress of their new stalls, and that they expected artists to adhere to the terms of the contract. Choir stalls were an expensive investment which would remain in the church for years to come, so patrons ensured they were completed according to their demands.

## 2.10 North-Italian choir contracts in context

Choir contracts can be placed in the context of other documentary sources of the period through comparison with contracts for other religious artworks and with contracts from Central Italy.

The contractual process for items of woodwork often involved artists who worked on choirs, and the terminology was inevitably very similar. Pierantonio degli Abati was commissioned in 1489 to make benches for the sacristy in the Santo in Padua and a *cassone* for books to be situated in the choir of the same church.<sup>218</sup> Familiar terminology included the term ‘tarsiatus’ for the benches, and ‘cum suis portellis, intarsiatum’ for the *cassone*. However, the *cassone* had to be ‘of such beauty and quality that it matches the choir’:

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<sup>215</sup>11 October 1468: ‘Maistro piero da vizenzia [illegible word] e maistro antonio de marco e maistro lunardo avemo visto . . . el choro he fato de la giesia de sant’antonin per man de maistro Jacomo e per non esser fato chome se contien into el disegno’. Connell (1988), p. 287.

<sup>216</sup>Biagio de’ Cesani wrote that Giacomo ‘lafato senza lizenzia esenza promision alguna’ and that ‘non puolfarme spender piui delpato’. Connell (1988), p. 288.

<sup>217</sup>Connell (1988), p. 287: ‘fuit dare debere dicto blasio uti commissario patris sui L. 23 s. 14.’

<sup>218</sup>The contract is dated 15 May 1489 and is transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 63.

such stipulations requiring consistency in church decoration obviously did not feature in choir contracts.<sup>219</sup> Contracts for intarsia stalls or benches for sacristies rarely specified the iconography to be depicted, but as in choir contracts, sometimes stipulated the technique of perspective. In the 1487 contract for the stalls of the sacristy of Parma Cathedral, Bernardino da Lendinara had to construct chests and stalls ‘with those perspectives responding to the forms of the drawings’.<sup>220</sup> However, a detailed contract for a sedilia and benches in the sacristy of the Santo in Padua specified that certain Franciscan saints should be portrayed in a frieze, and that the sedilia must be like the one in the sacristy of the Frari in Venice.<sup>221</sup>

Luchino Bianchino, who completed the choir of San Paolo in Parma in 1510, was commissioned to make the main wooden doors of Parma Cathedral and the Baptistry on 24 April 1490.<sup>222</sup> Many of the practical clauses in the document also featured in choir contracts: the wood, nails and tools were to be provided by the Cathedral, and Luchino was to be paid 330 ducats for the doors.<sup>223</sup> As in some choir contracts, a complex system of payments was explained, comprising five payments, the last being made at completion. Luchino had provided a design for the doors, which according to the contract had to be changed slightly.<sup>224</sup>

Choir contracts from other areas of Italy did not significantly differ from those in northern Italy, using similar terminology and clauses. At the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi, choir stalls for the Lower Church were commissioned in 1467 and those for the Upper Church in 1491.<sup>225</sup> In both contracts, the words ‘corus’ and ‘sedia’ were used to describe

<sup>219</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 63: ‘talīs pulcritudinīs et qualitatis quod respondeat choro’.

<sup>220</sup>Quintavalle (1959), p. 103: ‘con quelle prospettive conveniente in la forma de li designi’. Contract dated 10 September 1487.

<sup>221</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 61: ‘et in frixo superiori dicti lateris teneantur ponere quinque figuras, videlicet annuntiationem B. Virginis, et in medio figuram S. Antonii, et ab aliis lateribus figuram S. Francisci a manu dextra, et ab alia figura S. Bonaeventurae a parte versus in claustrum . . . dicta sedilia cum omnibus suis necessariis et ornamentis secundum formam et designum banchorum et sedilium existentium in sacristia ecclesiae Domus Magnae Fratrum Minorum in civitate Venetiarum’. The contract is dated 23 April 1489.

<sup>222</sup>The contract is transcribed in Pezzana (1859), Appendix, p. 29, doc. XXVIII.

<sup>223</sup>Pezzana (1859), Appendix, p. 29, doc. XXVIII: ‘Primo che dicti S.ri fabricanti siano tenuti et obligati a dare a dicto Luchino tutto quello lignamo sara necessario per fare li fusti de dicte porte, et similiter tutte le feramente et chioldi grossi necessari . . . Item che dicti S.ri fabricanti siano tenuti et obligati . . . di dare adesso Luchino . . . ducati trecento trenta cio e 330’.

<sup>224</sup>Luchino was to make the doors as the design ‘Excepto che le roxe grande che vano nel mezo de cadauno quadro cum essi quadri siano tuti de uno pezo cum una gola o sia cornisa quale venga a circumdare tutti li quadri de dicte porte et sia lavorata como e la cornisa de li quadri idest la golla.’ Pezzana (1859), Appendix, p. 29, doc. XXVIII.

<sup>225</sup>The choir stalls for the Lower Church were commissioned to Paulino di Giovanni da Ascoli in May 1467, and the contract is transcribed in Cesare Cenci, *Documentazione di vita assisana* (Grottaferrata,



the furniture and both choirs were to be constructed according to a design provided by the artist. In northern Italy, the responsibility of providing wood and tools could either fall to the church or the artist. In Assisi, this irregularity also prevailed, with the church providing materials for the Lower choir and the artist providing materials for the Upper choir.

However, some variations in terminology in choir stall contracts from Central Italy can be detected. In the contract for the choir of San Francesco in Sansepolcro dated 14 May 1378, Fra Luca di Bernardo was commissioned to remake the choir, which had been devastated in an earthquake.<sup>226</sup> He had to make a foundation with kneelers, seats, walls (or stall-backs), carved canopies, intarsia (here called ‘remessis’), three entrances from the lower choir to the upper choir and four lecterns: ‘solario cum proparis, sedibus, parietibus, coperta intalliis, remessis, tribus anditis a coro basso ad corum altum et quatuor legiis’. The term *prospere* was used for kneelers in front of stalls in the San Zaccaria contract but could mean the swing-seats of stalls, and the words *solum* and *anditus* appeared in the San Francesco in Pavia contract.<sup>227</sup> However, the terms *parietibus* (relating to walls), *remessis* and *coperta intalliis* were more unusual.<sup>228</sup>

The term *prospere* was also used in the contract for the Servite choir of Sant’Angelo in Vado dated 27 November 1400, but in this context it probably refers to the actual swing-seats rather than kneelers.<sup>229</sup> Architectural terminology was used in the choir contract for San Francesco al Prato dated 16 July 1416.<sup>230</sup> The artist Lorenzo di Stefano was commissioned to construct a beautiful vault that would join together one part of the choir to the other at the entrance: ‘la voltta bella che agiungha da l’una partte all’altra

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Rome: Collegiū S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1974–1976), vol. 2, p. 696. The choir stalls for the Upper Church were commissioned to Domenico di Antonio Indivini da San Severino on 3 August 1491, and the contract is transcribed in Cenci (1974–1976), vol. 2, p. 857. Further information on the two choirs can be found in Giorgio Bonsanti, ed., *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi—Basilica superiore* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2002), Text volume, pp. 413–18, 608–19.

<sup>226</sup>Banker and Cooper (2009), p. 572: ‘reficere et rehidificare de novo chorum dicte ecclesie . . . qui ibi esse solebat ante terremotos quorum vi devastatus fuit’. The original is in ASF, Notarile anticosimiano 16185, Ser Paolo di Ciuccio di Jacopo, fols. 93v–94r.

<sup>227</sup>Battaglia (1961–2002), vol. 14, p. 702: ‘Prospera: manganella del coro. Con sineddoche: stallo’.

<sup>228</sup>Lewis and Short (1998), p. 1303: ‘Parietarius . . . belonging to walls’.

<sup>229</sup>The contract is dated 27 November 1400, and can be found in ASF, NA 7121, (Not. Matteo di Angelo Fedeli) fol. 4045r–v, transcribed in Banker and Cooper (2009), doc. 8, pp. 573–74: ‘in quo chuoro dixerunt venire vigintisex prospere’. The artist was to be paid ‘pro qualibet prospera’, suggesting that the term refers to the stalls.

<sup>230</sup>The contract is transcribed in Francesco Gurrieri, *La fabbrica del San Francesco in Prato* (Prato: Azienda autonoma di turismo, 1968), pp. 61–63.

desso Choro all'entrare'.<sup>231</sup> The choir was to be like the one in San Giovanni in Florence (presumably meaning the Florentine Baptistery), except the intarsia and the vault or 'cielo'; rather the small vault or 'volicciuole tutte di legname' should be at least as high as the one in Santa Croce in Florence.<sup>232</sup>

The craftsman employed to construct the choir of the Servite church of Sant'Angelo in Vado in 1400 was named as 'magister Johannes olim magistri Schiacti carpentarius', a term rarely used in northern Italy.<sup>233</sup> In contrast to some of the adulatory descriptions of craftsmen in contracts from northern Italy, the term 'carpenter' seems less complimentary. Perhaps in northern areas the high quality of woodworking meant that artists were respected as masters of great skill rather than as mere carpenters.

The commissioning process for items of domestic furniture was less formal than for ecclesiastical woodwork. Few notarial contracts survive for domestic furniture such as beds, *cassoni* or *lettucci*. A Florentine example of an agreement regarding furniture for the domestic interior appears in a memorandum kept by the patron Lorenzo di Matteo Morelli in 1466. He noted an agreement with the woodworker Giuliano da Maiano to construct a new day-bed or *lettuccio*, to be decorated with three images of the Triumphs along with other intarsia work, and had to be similar to another *lettuccio* Giuliano had made for Nicholo di Luigi Ridolfi.<sup>234</sup> This agreement contained terms used in choir contracts, such as the *modo et forma* clause, but there was no reference to a full notarial document. The Morelli *lettuccio* would have been a prized piece, so the patron wanted written evidence of the agreement, but with less expensive items presumably a verbal contract was sufficient.

The two spheres of domestic and church furniture were very closely related in fifteenth-century Italy in style, iconography, terminology and craftsmen. However, in the commissioning process the two areas notably diverged. Whereas contracts for church furniture were

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<sup>231</sup>Gurrieri (1968), p. 62.

<sup>232</sup>Gurrieri (1968), p. 62: 'Item, che detto choro debba essere adobbato e debbasi fare alla forma e nel modo che e quelle di santo Giovanni da Firenze; manca le tarsiere e il cielo, e non è alto quanto si richiede a esso choro; che el detto Lorenzo sia tenuto al detto choro ornare di tarsiere, e alzarlo e dargli suo dovere come si chonviene; e che l'altezza elle dette tastiere e volicciuole tutte di legname sia almeno come quella del choro di Santa Crocie di Firenze.'

<sup>233</sup>Banker and Cooper (2009), doc. 8, p. 573.

<sup>234</sup>On 15 November 1466, Lorenzo paid for a 'lettuccio di braccia iiii entrovi iiii quadri, e in ciaschuno un trionfo di chonnesso e chosi molte altre tarsie chome siamo d'achordo, apare per un richordo in questo a c[arta]. 161' At fol. 161 the agreement with Giuliano was clarified: '3 quadri e in ciaschuno 1° trionfo di chonnesso e nel braccuolo 1° noda aperta e molte altre tarsie, in modo che sia di quella qualita che 1° che pocho tenpo inanzi fe a Nicholo di Luigi Ridolfi.' The documents are in ASF, Archivio Gherardi-Piccolomini, 137, fol. 18 and fol. 161, transcribed in Lydecker (1987), pp. 115–16n.

complex and detailed, documentary evidence is lacking for domestic furniture. Choirs and other items of church furniture were intended for a public space, demanding a substantial financial commitment and extended time frame. Often requiring the consensus of a large group of people, choirs were significant investments in the church fabric.

Although similar in material and patronage, choir and altarpiece contracts were notably different. O'Malley has analysed the relationship between woodworkers who constructed the altarpiece frameworks and the painters who decorated them; the two craftsmen were normally in contact with each other, but were sometimes commissioned separately. In roughly half of the altarpiece contracts that O'Malley considered, the painter was asked to supply the wooden framework or 'ornamento'.<sup>235</sup>

While choir contracts generally lacked clauses regarding iconography and dimensions, these elements were not unsurprisingly normally included in altarpiece contracts. However, altarpiece contracts also contained similar imitation clauses to choir documents. Glasser noted three types of *modo et forma* conditions in painting contracts: the replication of iconography; the copying of both form and iconography; and less specific stipulations.<sup>236</sup> Whereas imitation clauses in choir contracts showed no discernable correlation regarding choirs of the same religious order, occasional patterns emerge from altarpiece contracts. A commonly cited example is the group of altarpieces commissioned for Franciscan churches which copied the form of Ghirlandaio's *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece for the Franciscan Observants of San Girolamo in Narni.<sup>237</sup> Contracts for Franciscan altarpieces in Monte Santo di Todi in 1507, San Martino in Trevi in 1522, and the Convent of the Annunciata near Norcia in 1541 specified imitation of the Ghirlandaio Coronation.<sup>238</sup> Imitation clauses specifying subject-matter showed that certain iconographies defined the identity of religious orders.<sup>239</sup>

A distinctive term used in painting contracts was the 'sua mano' clause, requiring

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<sup>235</sup>O'Malley (2005), p. 36.

<sup>236</sup>Glasser (1965), p. 65.

<sup>237</sup>Glasser notes that the altarpiece must have been finished around 3 June 1486 when it was ready for an appraisal. Glasser (1965), p. 67.

<sup>238</sup>The first copy was commissioned to Lo Spagna by the Franciscans of Monte Santo di Todi on 12 September 1507. The same artist was commissioned by the Franciscans of San Martino in Trevi in 1522, and a pupil of Lo Spagna, Jacopo Siciliano, was employed to paint the altarpiece for the Annunciata. Glasser (1965), pp. 67–68.

<sup>239</sup>Schiferl notes the variety of purposes served by comparative or imitation clauses in contracts for confraternity processional banners. Schiferl (1991), p. 126.

that all or certain parts of the altarpiece has to be painted by the artist's own hand. For example, the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio was employed to paint the altarpiece for the Ospedale degli Innocenti in 1485 'all by his hand',<sup>240</sup> whereas the same artist was obliged only to paint the heads of the saints in an altarpiece for San Francesco di Palco in Prato.<sup>241</sup> These conditions ensured the artist did not take on other work during the time of the commission, and that the patron obtained a genuine work. Such *sua mano* clauses did not feature in choir contracts, perhaps reflecting the complex nature of choir construction. Several craftsmen could be involved in the construction process, including the artists who supplied cartoons for intarsia panels, carving and tracery specialists and painters who provided the final touches of paint and gilding. It was simply not practicable for clients to request that particular parts of the choir were completed by the nominated head of the workshop.

## 2.11 Conclusion

Choir contracts provided valuable insights into what patrons considered vital to agree at the outset of work. Further, non-documented discussions must have decided certain fundamental factors such as size and iconography. Although the iconography of choir stalls preoccupies many modern writers on the subject, documentary evidence suggests that it was not a great concern for patrons, the technique of intarsia perspective itself being more important.

Contracts give an enlightening vision into workshop practices, especially the division of work. For example, since Pierantonio degli Abati was only commissioned to create stall-backs for Monte Berico in Vicenza, structural elements must have been fabricated by different artists. The choir of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice was commissioned to two workshops on the same day, in two identically-worded contracts with Arduino and Alberto da Baiso and a certain Giovanni de Trigoli. Although the division of duties was not explained in the documents, they show that both parties were equally responsible for the successful completion of the furniture.

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<sup>240</sup>Glasser (1965), p. 73: 'tutto di sua mano'.

<sup>241</sup>Glasser (1965), p. 73: 'e quali santi debbo io Domenicho diligentemente disegnare di mia mano echchosi cholorire tutte le teste'.

This analysis of choir contracts has revealed how documentary sources accord with visual evidence. Terms used to describe stalls and their decoration corresponds to their actual appearance. For instance, in some contracts stall-ends or *teste* were specifically requested to be particularly ornate as evidenced in the finished products which were often elaborately carved, containing images of animals or saints. Some contracts requested superior dignitaries' stalls, and indeed in surviving choirs these stalls can be distinguished by their more elaborate framing or iconography. The use of the term *spalliera* in both religious and domestic contexts accords with stylistic comparisons between stalls and *cassoni*.

Documents shed light on the construction of stalls, indicating which woods were used for different purposes and showing that stalls were composed of constituent parts. Particularly enlightening was the litigation surrounding the stalls in Santo Stefano in Venice, which revealed how different elements were made concurrently and assembled at the end. This method tallies with the sometimes incongruous arrangement of different stylistic elements in stalls of this period; for example, the appearance of Renaissance perspective panels alongside Gothic traceried stall-dividers. In the later fifteenth century both carved Gothic stalls and intarsia furniture were constructed, and contracts demonstrate that both styles commanded similar prices. Visual evidence indicates that neither style was considered superior, a conclusion supported by documentary sources.

The visual history of choir stalls shows that particular religious orders did not consistently request the same styles or iconographies. Likewise contractual evidence illustrates that most *modo et forma* agreements referred to churches of various religious orders often in different cities. The presence of similar furniture styles across northern Italy not only resulted from migrant workshops but specific contractual obligations.

Stall contracts contained similar clauses to contemporary altarpiece contracts, highlighting the significance placed on choir furniture in this period. As Glasser concluded, the detail included in contracts showed that works of art were 'fervently desired' by patrons.<sup>242</sup> The high cost of choirs and their appreciation by contemporaries shows that woodworking was not considered a 'low' art form in this period.<sup>243</sup> Furthermore, precise arrangements

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<sup>242</sup>Glasser (1965), p. 277.

<sup>243</sup>As Ciati pointed out 'il confronto con alcuni contratti firmati da rappresentanti delle cosiddette "arti maggiore", cioè pittori, scultori e architetti, comprova infatti che la loro posizione e il loro rapporto con la

for payment, accommodation and provisions of wood and tools underlines that choir construction was an enormous practical and financial outlay which could take several years. Contracts show the importance placed on the artistic style and practical construction of choir stalls, reflecting their prominent position in the church interior and integral function in the liturgy.

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committenza non era fundamentalmente diverso.' Ciati (1980), p. 212.

## Chapter 3

# Liturgy and Music in the Choir

A manuscript illumination conserved in the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo in Brescia shows a group of Benedictine monks singing from a large lectern in the centre of their choir precinct, in front of richly inlaid and painted stalls (Fig. 101).<sup>1</sup> One of the monks stands on tiptoes to peer at the choirbook through his primitive spectacles, while on the right two acolytes form a procession towards the high altar. The intarsia *a buio* and carved volutes decorating the lectern match the stall-backs behind, giving a sense of the grand scale of the precinct. The furniture is a vital element of the religious ritual, which enlivened the senses through music, incense, and visual decoration. In this image, choir ceremonial comes to life.

This chapter will consider the choir as a location for religious ceremony and music. The previous two chapters analysed stalls as material objects, both in relation to their visual appearance and the legal procedures surrounding their commissioning. However, stalls were a practical addition to the church fabric, fundamental to the conduct of liturgical services. Investigating how stalls were used will provide insights into their morphology, ergonomics and the incorporation of certain imagery.

My work encompasses choir stalls from northern Italy in various types of churches, including cathedrals, houses of secular canons and churches of monastic and mendicant orders. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to collate the rites and ceremonials for all the different churches in northern Italy with fifteenth-century stalls. Instead, it will

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<sup>1</sup>Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, M 45 (from collection of Paolo Tosio). Attributed to either Francesco (c. 1450 to before 1515) or Girolamo (1474/5- 1555) dai Libri. Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 18, fig. 4.

bring together certain features of the liturgy common to different orders, to examine this interaction between form and function. Who performed music in the choir and what were the different functions of stalls and lecterns? How were stalls used in religious ritual? How was choir furniture designed for its various functions?

### 3.1 Placement and hierarchy

Before later renovations, choir precincts in monastic and mendicant churches were usually situated before the high altar in two L-shaped rows. Choir precincts in their original nave positions exist in the Frari in Venice, Santa Giustina in Padua and the little known church of San Vittore in Bologna (Fig. 102). Observations on seating placement, viewing axes and the arrangement of iconography and inscriptions in these unaltered choirs can be applied to those which have since been modified.

Certain features were common to most monastic and mendicant choir precincts, relating to the practical use of the furniture. At the west end of the precinct, a door or double doors would form the entrance to the choir. Doors still survive in situ at San Vittore in Bologna (Fig. 103) and choir doors from other churches were preserved in different locations after changes in seating arrangements.<sup>2</sup> Doors were also specified in certain choir contracts, such in as the 1494 agreement for the choir in St Mary the Great in Zadar.<sup>3</sup> Two entrance stalls were situated to either side of the western opening, and were reserved for the most senior members of the religious community. As the premier seats in each row, their occupants would have had a clear and direct view to the altar. At the opposite end of the choir, inscriptions referring to artists or patrons were often placed on eastern terminal stall-ends, facing the high altar. The four terminal stalls were important sites of imagery, seen in carved upper stall-ends, stall-backs or substall-ends. In the centre of the choir, the large lectern often incorporated a cupboard for the storage of manuscripts in a chest beneath.

The arrangement of the choir precinct articulated clear ideas on the hierarchy of the clergy and their movement in and out of the area. Despite the dismantling and reconstruction of many north-Italian choirs, it is still possible to identify various features

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<sup>2</sup>The choir door in San Domenico in Bologna was made by Fra Damiano Zambelli in 1538, but when the choir was moved to behind the high altar in 1625, it was reused as a sacristy door. Alce (1969), pp. 51, 54.

<sup>3</sup>Contract dated 24 April 1494: 'necnon facere portam dicti chori'. Petricoli (1972), p. 132.



relating to their original formation.

### 3.1.1 Dignitaries' stalls

Dignitaries' stalls in choir precincts were differentiated in various ways: through distinctive iconographies, techniques or architectural structure. Differences could be as stark as displaying a perspective intarsia panel in an otherwise plain choir, or as subtle as a slightly more elaborate border around the stall-back. A hierarchy also existed between the two stalls: the south stall was generally more superior since it was on the right as clergy or religious entered the choir.

Iconography could be employed to indicate the importance of dignitaries' stalls. In the stalls of Santa Maria in Spilimbergo, which copied those in the Frari in Venice, the two stalls displayed carved reliefs of the *Madonna and Child* and the *Man of Sorrows*.<sup>4</sup> As the only two stalls to depict Christ and the Virgin, they were clearly superior to the remaining stalls, which showed saints, apostles and doctors of the church. Similarly, at the Certosa di Pavia two entrance stalls display intarsia images of the *Madonna and Child* on the north, and *Christ the Redeemer* on the south (Fig. 104). Further iconographic pairings on the return stalls reinforces the idea of a hierarchy of positions: the second stalls show John the Evangelist on the north and John the Baptist on the south, while the third stalls depict saints Peter and Paul.

In choirs that have experienced later disruptions, iconography can indicate original hierarchical positions. In the Cremona Cathedral choir, four panels of saints exist among generic intarsia imagery: stall one shows the bishop-saint Imerio, stall twenty the archangel Gabriel, stall twenty-four the Virgin Mary and stall forty-four (the last on the right) St Omobono.<sup>5</sup> Although no descriptions survive of the stalls in their original position, it is likely that the Annunciation would have been situated on the entrance stalls (Fig. 105) and the two Cremonese saints at the western terminal stalls, closest to the high altar.<sup>6</sup> The Annunciation was a particularly appropriate theme, reminding the canons of the

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<sup>4</sup>In their original arrangement in the cathedral, the *Virgin and Child* would have been on the north side with the *Man of Sorrows* on the south side.

<sup>5</sup>As the stalls are now situated around the semi-circular apse, the numbering starts with the first stall on the left and continues to the last stall on the right. Identification of the saints is from Puerari (1967), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup>The intarsia panels of Gabriel and the Virgin stylistically developed from panels produced by Platina for a sacristy cupboard for the cathedral, dated 1480. Bandera and Foglia (2000), pp. 45–46.

incarnation every time they entered the choir. A scene of the Annunciation also features in the mid-fifteenth-century choir of Rab Cathedral, carved in the western stall-ends facing the nave.<sup>7</sup>

Non-religious iconography could also differentiate dignitaries' stalls. In the Benedictine Cassinese church of San Colombano in Bobbio, most of the stall-backs are decorated with a combination of geometric intarsia designs and blind tracery patterns. On the two easternmost stalls, however, stall-backs are occupied with refined intarsia *a buio* images of flowers in vases: carnations on the north side and convolvulus (common bindweed) on the south. These two panels are also surrounded by intarsia borders of flower patterns, superior in quality to those on the remaining stalls.

In several choir precincts, only two stalls exhibit perspective intarsia panels, demonstrating how technique could articulate hierarchy. In the choir of Sant'Anastasia in Verona (now situated in the sacristy) two intarsia panels depicting cupboard interiors stand out amongst other panels of grotesque linear patterns. A vase of flowers and a bird cage appears on one panel, and musical instruments and a music book on the other, both evidently originating from the dignitaries' stalls (Fig. 106).

Status could also be indicated in more subtle ways. At Santa Giustina in Padua, standard perspective intarsia scenes appear on two entrance stalls, both surrounded by wide intarsia patterns on a dark background. Adding symbolic meaning, the borders contain eucharistic motifs such as vines and pomegranates, and on the south side, bucrania. Increased dimensions of dignitaries' stalls could also provide subtle indicators of superiority, whilst additionally aiding comfort. In Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, the stalls measure 700mm in width, except for the abbot's stall which measures 790mm and the prior's stall which measures 750mm. A relatively small difference such as this cannot easily be noticed by the viewer, but would have added greater comfort to the sitter.

### 3.1.2 Terminal stalls

Choirs arranged on rectilinear plans were accessed from four main entrances: at the east and west ends of each range. Important sites for imagery and inscriptions, stall-ends were

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<sup>7</sup>The choir is dated 1445, and Domijan attributes the high quality of the figural carving to Matteo Moronzon, who constructed the choir of Zadar Cathedral. Domijan (2005), pp. 21–22.

seen by members of the religious community when they entered the choir, whilst mentally preparing themselves for worship. Defining the limits of the choir space, decoration of these ‘heads’ of the choir was also specifically requested in contracts. In the Augustinian Hermits church of Santo Stefano in Venice, four heads of the choir can still be identified, despite the vicissitudes the furniture has experienced since its construction in the 1480s.<sup>8</sup> Amid dense ajouré stall-dividers, four figures of saints emerge, identified as Stephen, Augustine, Monica and Nicholas of Tolentino. In the original arrangement of the choir with the entrance at the west end, St Stephen (patron of the church) and St Augustine (legendary founder of the Augustinian order) would have appeared at the west stall-ends on the north and south dignitaries’ stalls respectively.<sup>9</sup> Since all four saints were particularly venerated by the Augustinians, their positioning on the choir reinforced a strong sense of religious identity.

Similarly at Sant’Ambrogio in Milan, busts of bearded prophets emerge from foliate carving in four stall-ends. Now unidentifiable, the four figures wear hats and hold scrolls which would have probably bore painted inscriptions. In my reconstruction of the choir in front of the high altar, the four saints would have faced away from the choir itself, but greeted the monks as they entered.<sup>10</sup> The four stall-ends in Sant’Ambrogio also have vertical standards supported by two dragon heads, which act almost as guardians of the choir area. Carved dragon stall-ends also featured in the fourteenth-century choir of Verona Cathedral and as fifteenth-century additions to the choir benches in Split Cathedral.<sup>11</sup>

In the Certosa di Pavia choir (in its original position), four inscriptions appear on the

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<sup>8</sup>Bristot has recently proposed a reconstruction of the original choir screen (parts of which survive in the presbytery) crossing the entire width of the nave at the level of the easternmost nave columns. The stalls, she proposes, were separated from the screen and placed in the presbytery in two curved ranges with an entrance at the west end. Annalisa Bristot, ‘Note a margine di restauri lombardeschi’, in *Tullio Lombardo. Scultore e architetto nella Venezia del Rinascimento*, ed. by Matteo Ceriana (Verona: Cierre, 2007), p. 452. The choir was removed to the apse after the building of a new presbytery after 1610. Ferdinando Apollonio, *La Chiesa e il Convento di S. Stefano in Venezia* (Venice 1911), pp. 24–25.

<sup>9</sup>In their present location in the *cappella maggiore*, the stalls are arranged in two curves with an opening for a door at the east end. The figures of Augustine and Stephen appear at the east end of the two curves, so when the stalls were arranged before the high altar they would have been the entrance stalls. As the stalls would have been facing the opposite direction, the placing of the saints is reversed, with Stephen on the north side and Augustine on the south. In her recent article, Anne Markham Schulz did not mention these figures of saints. Markham Schulz (2008).

<sup>10</sup>The figure on the abbot’s stall-end is facing to the right, so when the stall was situated at the south entrance to the choir, the figure would be facing towards the main body of the church. The same is true for the other figures.

<sup>11</sup>Simple carved dragons also form stall-ends in the early fourteenth-century choir of San Francesco, Gualdo Tadino in Umbria. Donal Cooper, ‘Franciscan Choir Enclosures and the Function of Double-Sided Altarpieces in Pre-Tridentine Umbria’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 64 (2001), pp. 28–29, fig. 28.

lower sections of the terminal stall-ends at seat height. The quotations are all associated with the mental preparation required before an act of worship. On the side of the south dignitary's stall are the words: 'NON APPAREBIS IN CONSPECTU MEO VACUUS' or 'no one is to appear before me empty-handed' (Exodus 23.15). Opposite, on the side of north dignitary's stall appears the quotation: 'ANTE ORATIONEM PREPARA ANIMAM TUAM' or 'before prayer, prepare your soul' (Ecclesiasticus 18.23). On the easternmost stall on the south side are the words 'PRAEBE FILI MI COR TUUM MIHI' meaning 'my son, give me your heart' (Proverbs 23.26). On the side of the easternmost stall on the north side is the inscription 'NIHIL ENIM OPERI DEI PREPONERE LICIT' or 'nothing should be put before the work of God', a text from the Carthusian statutes.<sup>12</sup> The quotations were reminders of the seriousness of worshipping God through daily prayers, liturgy and music.

Utilitarian inscriptions also appeared on stalls, providing information about the artist or patron of the choir. Often appearing at the eastern stall-ends, they would have faced the altar, almost in an act of dedication.<sup>13</sup> Simple inscriptions provided the name of the artist and date of completion, as in the fifteenth-century choir in Santa Giustina in Padua, where two inscriptions appear on the eastern stall-ends.<sup>14</sup> At Cremona Cathedral, two long inscriptions list the secular and religious authorities presiding at the time of the choir's completion. In their present position, an inscription detailing the contemporary civic leaders together with the name of the artist, Giovanni Maria Platina, appears on the north stall-end.<sup>15</sup> On the opposite side, the text lists the cathedral clergy and praises the work which was done 'not by human hands but by the divine art of Giovanni Maria Platina, the new genius Phidias'.<sup>16</sup> This second inscription ostensibly dedicated the furniture to the

<sup>12</sup>This Carthusian ceremonial will be discussed in detail below. *Ordinarium Cartusiense, continens novae collectionis statutorum eiusdem Ordinis partem primam, in que de his tractatur quae ad uniformem modum ac ordinem Divina celebrandi officia cum eiusdem caeremoniis in toto Ordine Cartusiensi faciunt* (Lyon, 1641) (hereafter referred to as *Ordinarium Cartusiense* [1641]), p. 78.

<sup>13</sup>Inscriptions could also be placed on dignitaries' stall-ends, as the example of Spilimbergo Cathedral testifies. As reconstructed in their original location, an inscription on the north dignitary's stall read 'MARCUS QUONDAM JOHANNIS PETRI DE VICENTIA FECIT HOC OPUS 1477' and on the south stall 'TEMPORE DOMINI ETHORIS EXECUTORIS TESTAMENTI PRESBITERI JULIANI 1477'. Furlan, Casadio and Ciol (1997), p. 121.

<sup>14</sup>On the south-eastern stall: 'HOC OPUS FECIT DOMINICVS ET FRATER SVVS DE PIACETIA ET FRACISEVS PARMISA', and on the north-eastern stall: 'MCCCCLXXVIIDIL PRIMA SETEMBRIS'.

<sup>15</sup>The inscription reads: 'MO CCCC<sup>O</sup> LXXXVIII<sup>O</sup> HOC ANNO ET TEMPORE INCLITA HAS SEDES VIDET CREMONA. IOANNES REGNAT DUX GALEAZ. LUDOVICUS REGNI MODERATOR EST EQUISSIMUS. URBIS ASCANIUS PRESUL. RENATUS PROCONSUL TRIVULCIUS. VIRGINIS PROVENTUS ELECTI CIVES REGUNT IOANNES BAPTISTA MALUMBRA IURIS UTRIVSQUE DOCTOR, IACOBUS TRECCHUS, RUBERTUS GUAZONUS. FABER IOANNES MARIA PLATINA FINIT OPUS'. Transcribed in Puerari (1967), p. 145.

<sup>16</sup>The full inscription reads: 'ACCIPE VIRGO TUE CONSTRUCTA SEDILIA LAUDI PRO QUIBUS OPTATUR NIL NISI

Virgin Mary. When the choir was placed in front of the high altar, the two inscriptions would have been at the easternmost extremes of the choir, facing the high altar in an act of devotion.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.3 Seating positions

Unlike many north-European stalls, choirs in northern Italy generally did not feature inscriptions indicating the precise seating arrangements of the members of the religious community.<sup>18</sup> A notable exception is the choir of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, in which seats for the cantor and succentor were indicated by intarsia inscriptions on the substalls.<sup>19</sup> Despite a general absence of such visual indicators, a strict order was observed in Italian choirs. An early sixteenth-century description of the seating in the choir of Parma Cathedral shows that a precise order was followed at least for stalls at the eastern and western extremes (see Appendix B.3 on p. 296).

Before dramatic alterations in 1566, the choir was in a rectilinear formation in front of the high altar on the raised presbytery.<sup>20</sup> The Archipresbyter or chief priest sat in the first stall on the right when entering the choir, and the Archdeacon sat in the first stall on the left. The second stall on the right was occupied by the steward or prepositus, while the elder canon (*antiquor . . . canonicus*) sat in the second stall on the left. Canons then sat in the remaining upper stalls ‘in the order of their reception [into the community]’. Following

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VERA SALUS. SEDENTE ILLUSTRISIMO ET REVERENDISSIMO ASCANIO MARIA SANCTI VITI DIACONO CARDINALI SFORTIA VICECOMITE BONONIENSI LEGATO DIVI FRANCISCI SFORTIE FILIO HUIUS SEDIS ADMINISTRATORE PERPETUO, ZANARDO BAGAROTO IURIS UTRISQUE DOCTORE VICARIO ET CANONICO, ET EXISTENTIBUS PRELATIS ET CANONICIS: ALEXANDRO PELIZARIO ARCIDIACONO, GIUDINO PIASIO DECANO, IOANNE ALIA, IOANNE FRANCISCO CARMINATO, DONINO BURGIO, IOANNE PETRO EUSTACHIO, IOANNE MARIA COMITE, BARTHOLOMEO MONTINO APOSTOLICO PROTONOTARIO AC SANTISSIMI DOMINI NOSTRI CAMERARIO, ALBERTO CAPITANEO IURIS UTRISQUE DOCTORE ARCIDIACONO, IACOBO CAZULO CANTORE, ISAAC RESTILO, PAULO CROTTO, ANTONIO BONITIO, NICOLAO CARENZONO, IOANNE BAPTISTA PELIZARIO, IOANNE ANTONIO ORPHEO APOSTOLICO PROTONOTARIO, PHILIPPO TINTO DECRETORUM DOCTORE OPUS PERFECIT NON HUMANIS MANIBUS SED DIVINIS ARTIBUS PLATINA IOANNE MARIA NOVUS INGENIO PHIDIAS IN QUO EGREGIUM OPERE FABRILIS SPECIMEN [PRO]DIDIT. MCCCCLXXXX KALENDIS NOVEMBRIS’. Transcribed in Puerari (1967), p. 145.

<sup>17</sup>The two inscriptions could not have been read together since they would have been at either end of opposite ranges.

<sup>18</sup>In Beverley Minster in England, four of the choir misericords, dated to 1520, have inscriptions indicating the seating positions of the Treasurer, Chancellor, Precentor and Warden of the Fabric. Tracy (1990), p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>The choir is now behind the high altar, and the two seats with inscriptions are situated at the east end: ‘CANTOR’ on the first stall on north side and ‘SUCCENTOR’ on the south.

<sup>20</sup>In 1566, the presbytery received a large new staircase designed by Girolamo Bedoli and the choir was moved behind the high altar, which was reconsecrated in 1584. Bagatin lamented the lack of a systematic reconstruction of the presbytery in the fifteenth century. Bagatin (2004), pp. 270, 281.

the canons on the right side were the *primicerius* (canon with similar responsibilities to a precentor) and the first choir master (*guardachorus*), and on the left side the sacristan and the second cleric in charge of the week's services (*hebdomadarium*). The first substall on the right was occupied by the choir master when he was organising the offices, and on the left sat another choir master, the dogmani (who wore white fur almutia, a type of cape), elder priest (*antiquor presbyter*), priests (*presbyterum*), deacons and subdeacons. This description provides a fascinating insight into the way in which hierarchy could be expressed by seating order. The two entrance stalls—which also depict distinctive iconography—were reserved for the most senior members of the clergy, and canons were ranked according to when they joined the community.

In the Parma description, the choir master or *guardachorus* sat on the first substall on the right, a position with easy access to the centrally placed intarsia lectern which housed the choirbooks.<sup>21</sup> Inscriptions on these first substalls reserved them for the Cantor and Succentor in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, posts also associated with music (Fig. 107). In the early sixteenth-century choir of San Sisto in Piacenza, two stalls near the entrance to the substalls were decorated with intarsia panels showing complex four-part polyphonic motets (two parts on each stall), suggesting that they might have been reserved for the cantor or musical director (two parts of the harmony are shown on Fig. 108).<sup>22</sup> As we have seen, music books were a common feature of intarsia work, but the highly detailed nature of the San Sisto panels suggests a more specific identification purpose than mere decoration. I am not suggesting that the musical notation on stalls was actually sung, merely that its presence identified the intended occupant of the stall. Occupants of substalls had an unimpeded path to the central choir lectern, vital for those involved with the musical aspects of divine office.

Musical iconography also appeared in the choir of Santa Giustina in Padua: the thirteenth upper stall-back on the north range shows an open book depicting simple plainchant notation (Fig. 109). Intriguingly, this stall is adjacent to an opening created by a gap in the substalls, enabling easy access to the steps down to the pavement. Since this

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<sup>21</sup>In a contract dated 10 August 1471 the Fabbrica of the Cathedral instructed Cristoforo Canozzi and Pierantonio degli Abbati to make a large lectern for the choir, which had to depict two open books in intarsia on its two faces, for the sum of twenty-five ducats. Bagatin (2004), p. 268.

<sup>22</sup>The choir was completed by the artists Bartolomeo Spinelli da Busseto and Giovan Pietro Pambianchi da Colorno between 1514 and 1524, the date seen on the second stall on the right. Spinelli (1980), p. 79.

entrance is in alignment with the centrally placed lectern, it is likely that the stall's musical iconography identified its occupant as the cantor or choir director. A similar arrangement occurs in the choir of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, where an open music book appears in the lunette beneath the canopy of stall number 34 (Fig. 110).<sup>23</sup> Again, this stall has direct access to the lectern facilitated by a gap in the substalls. As both Santa Giustina and San Giovanni Evangelista were part of the Benedictine Cassinese congregation, it is tempting to conclude that the seating arrangements reflected a common liturgical practice.

Choir stalls were an intrinsically practical addition to the church fabric, and their decoration and iconography were related to their everyday use. The choir was constructed to reflect hierarchy through the embellishment of dignitaries' stalls and the designation of particular stalls to various ranks. Concentration of iconography, heraldry and inscriptions around the four stall-ends preserved the choir area as a sacred space in the church.

## 3.2 Liturgical practice in the choir

Examination of liturgical practice is fundamental to our understanding of how church furniture was used. Many statutes and ceremonials date from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, but would have still been observed in the fifteenth century. This section is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of liturgical practice, but rather an insight into how choirs in certain orders were used. Ceremonials will be analysed from the orders which have the most surviving choir stalls: the Benedictine and reformed Cassinese order, the Franciscan and Dominican orders, and two cathedrals. This range encompasses mendicant, monastic and secular guidelines, and although there were differences, certain common themes will become apparent. Of particular interest are rules governing seating arrangements, entrances to the choir area, the relationship of one range to the other, and the use of the lectern.

### 3.2.1 Benedictine Liturgy

In the Rule of St Benedict, most instructions required that monks stand or kneel, except at the Epistle and Gradual during Mass and during the responses at Vespers, when they

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<sup>23</sup>Although these stalls have been moved from their original location, it is likely that the gaps in the substalls remained the same.

could sit. During the night office, monks were allowed to sit on stalls or benches during three readings, but had to stand at the *Gloria* at the end of the third reading.<sup>24</sup> Monks had their designated own stall—‘*sedilia sua*’—in the choir. If a monk arrived late to the night office, then he was not allowed to stand ‘in his usual place’, but had to stand in the last place or a special place set aside by the Abbot where he could be seen by all.<sup>25</sup> Hierarchy was expressed by the designated order in which monks came to kiss the Abbot, sang psalms, and stood in the choir.<sup>26</sup>

Benedictine Observants, later known as the Cassinese congregation, produced various guidelines for behaviour at divine office, striking a balance between traditional practices and reform ideals. A manuscript containing instructions for divine service at the monastery of Santa Giustina was produced in 1448.<sup>27</sup> In rules for a procession for the feast of All Saints, the priests and monks were instructed to process through the cloister and cemetery, walking two by two following the crucifer.<sup>28</sup> After singing various responses, asperging and incensing, the monks ‘process reverently into the choir saying the psalm *De profundis* without singing’ and the priest ‘in the centre of the choir repeats the oration *Fidelium Deus*’.<sup>29</sup> The phrase ‘in medio chori’ commonly referred to the central choir lectern. The priests and ministers then return to the sacristy, while the rest of the community stay in the choir saying *Salve regina*.<sup>30</sup> Presumably still walking two by two, the ministers and monks would have filed into the two rows of stalls, leaving those in the centre around the

<sup>24</sup>Rule IX: ‘et sedentibus omnibus in scamnis, legantur vicissim a fratribus in codice super analogium tres lectiones, inter quas et tria responsoria cantentur. Duo responsoria sine “Gloria” dicantur, post tertiam vero lectionem qui cantat dicat “Gloriam”; quam dum incipit cantor dicere, mox omnes de sedilia sua surgant ob honorem et reverentiam sanctae Trinitatis.’ Benno Linderbauer, ed., *S. Benedicti Regula Monasteriorum* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1928), pp. 32–33.

<sup>25</sup>Rule XLIII: ‘Quod si quis in nocturnis vigiliis post “Gloriam” psalmi nonagesimi quarti, quem propter hoc omnino subtrahendo et morose volumus dici, occurrerit, non stet in ordine suo in choro, sed ultimus omnium stet aut in loco, quem talibus neglegentibus seorsum constituerit abbas, ut videantur ab ipso vel ab omnibus, usque dum completo opere Dei publica satisfactione paeniteat.’ Linderbauer (1928), pp. 52–53.

<sup>26</sup>Rule LXIII: ‘Ergo secundum ordines, quos constituerit vel quos habuerint ipsi fratres, sic accedant ad pacem, ad communionem, ad psalmum imponendum, in choro standum.’ Linderbauer (1928), p. 67.

<sup>27</sup>The manuscript is preserved in Padua, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. 1389, and has been in part transcribed in Francesco G. B. Trolese, ‘Usanze liturgiche del monasterio di Santa Giustina nel sec. XV: dal codice 1389 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova’, in *Amen vestrum: miscellanea di studi liturgico-pastorali in onore di p. Pelagio Visentin o.s.b.* Ed. by Alceste Catella (Padua: Messaggero, 1994). Although the actual choir stalls were produced later in the fifteenth century, their position and use probably reflect earlier practices.

<sup>28</sup>Trolese (1994), p. 59: ‘post crucem ergo sequuntur monachi bini processionaliter’.

<sup>29</sup>Trolese (1994), p. 59: ‘monachi processionaliter reveruntur in chorum dicendo psalmus *De profundis* sine cantu . . . in fine sacerdos in medio chori repetit orationem *Fidelium Deus*.’

<sup>30</sup>Trolese (1994), p. 59: ‘ultimate sacerdos revertitur in sacristiam cum ministris, ceteri autem qui remanent in choro dicunt *Salve regina* cum sua oratione.’



lectern to sing the oration.

More detailed liturgical guidelines were compiled in the reports from the annual General Chapter of the Cassinese order, imposing uniformity on the Congregation.<sup>31</sup> In 1429, a statute governed that: ‘if friars come after the *Gloria* of the hymn in the daily hours they genuflect, and at a sign they should go to their place’, suggesting that monks had their own seat in the choir.<sup>32</sup> Rules governed sitting and standing in the choir, including a 1441 guideline that monks should not stand in choir before the first response *Requiescant in pace*.<sup>33</sup> If the monks had to wait for this moment to rise then they must have been sitting up to this point. In the service of the dead, the hebdomadarian had to stand up during the prayers, but presumably the rest of the monks were allowed to stay seated.<sup>34</sup> A later Chapter General however, ruled that the monks also had to stand genuflecting during the Requiem Mass up to the prayers.<sup>35</sup> It was prescribed that the monks had to observe the hierarchy in the community, in order to show respect to senior members. When distributing incense or passing the kiss of peace, the monks had to begin with the prelate if one was present.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2.2 Franciscan Liturgy

The Franciscan ‘*Ordinationes divini officii*’, compiled by Haymo of Faversham before 1244, were intended to impose order and uniformity on the liturgy of the mass and office. Although Van Dijk characterised the guidelines as sketchy and incoherent, they give a genuine insight into how choir furniture was used.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of the office, friars had to stand in their seat (*‘sede sua’*) facing the altar and stay erect until the *Gloria*

<sup>31</sup>Tommaso Leccisotti, ‘Congregationis S. Iustinae de Paduae O.S.B. Ordinationes Capitulum Generalium. Parte I (1424–1474)’, *Miscellanea Cassinese* 16–17 (1939), Leccisotti (1970).

<sup>32</sup>General Chapter of 19 April 1429, quoted in Leccisotti (1939), p. 19: ‘Item quod si fratres veniant post gloriam hymnorum in horis diei genuflectant se, et facto signo vadant ad locum suum’.

<sup>33</sup>General Chapter of 8 May 1441, transcribed in Leccisotti (1939), p. 69: ‘Quod de choro et mensa nullus surgat nisi responsum fuerit in choro, ad primam requiescant in pace, et in mensa deo gratias.’

<sup>34</sup>General Chapter of 20 April 1472. Leccisotti (1939), p. 289: ‘Quod in officio mortuorum quando hebdomadarius dicit officium ad orationes stet quando ipsas dicit.’

<sup>35</sup>General Chapter of 27 April 1485. Leccisotti (1970), p. 39: ‘Similiter quando cantatur Missa pro defunctis, vel infra octavas seu tempore paschali, ad orationes stent genibus flexis.’

<sup>36</sup>General Chapter of 16 April 1459. Leccisotti (1939), vol. 2, p. 195: ‘Ut superioribus nostris in omnibus quantum possumus reverentiam debitam exhibeamus, ordinamus quod in solemnitatibus quando incensum sive pacis osculum exhibetur in choro, incipiat a prelato si sit presens.’

<sup>37</sup>S. J. P. Van Dijk, *Sources of the Modern Roman Liturgy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), vol. 1, p. 95.

*patri*.<sup>38</sup> When singing psalms, friars were required to stand erect, except during the office of the dead when they could sit.<sup>39</sup> The psalter was sung antiphonally, during which friars could sit when they were not singing: ‘they may stand and sit alternately’.<sup>40</sup> However, during the singing of particularly important chants, ‘everyone must stand erect whether singing or reading’.<sup>41</sup> When singing chants in this way—‘one choir against another’—the friars were required to face the opposite side of the choir.<sup>42</sup>

The technical method of psalm-singing was also prescribed in the statutes: there had to be a pause mid-verse rather than the final syllable of the first part being drawn out at length: ‘let their not be a prolongation [of a note] at the metrical point, but rather a suitable and equal pause’.<sup>43</sup> Two cantors—one from each range—would distribute the antiphons among the friars.<sup>44</sup> In the night and day offices, responses were to be sung by the friars in their stalls, but they could use the choir lectern if they did not have enough music books.<sup>45</sup>

The liturgy was sung by different combinations of friars in various locations in the choir, for instance during Sunday masses the *Invitatorium*, the last *Responsorium* and the *Alleluia* would be sung by two cantors in the centre of the choir, while the versicles and *Benedicamus* would be sung by a single friar in his stall.<sup>46</sup> In the text, ‘pulpitum in medio chori’ referred to the central choir lectern, interestingly employing a different terminology to choir contracts. On major feast days, friars would process into the choir presumably from the west end towards the altar in a prescribed order, starting with the cantors, then the

<sup>38</sup>Van Dijk (1963), vol. 2, p. 338: ‘incipiat officium in sede sua verso vultu contra altare, aliis fratribus consimili modo stantibus usque ad *Gloria patri*’.

<sup>39</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 338: ‘Et nota quod, quandocumque dicitur psalmodia plane et sine nota, stare debent omnes fratres erecti, praeterquam in psalmodia mortuorum in qua fratres sedeant.’

<sup>40</sup>Van Dijk (1963), vol. 2, pp. 338–39: ‘Item quandocumque duo psalmi vel quatuor dicuntur sub una antiphona, ille chorus debet stare in quo inchoatur antiphona, praeterquam in prima tempore pascale et in completorio. In omnibus aliis stent et sedeant alternatim’.

<sup>41</sup>Van Dijk (1963), vol. 2, p. 339: ‘praeterquam in *Laudate dominum omnes gentes*, et *Laudate dominum de coelis* et *Quicumque vult* et officio beate virginis, et eiusdem lectionibus plane dictis, et *Benedictus* et *Magnificat* et *Nunc dimittis* et himnis, in quibus omnibus stare debent erecti, sive cantentur sive legantur.’

<sup>42</sup>Van Dijk (1963), vol. 2, p. 347: ‘Nota quod omni tempore quando communiter in choro psallitur vel cantatur, unus chorus contra alium versis vultibus contra alium et regione vertatur.’

<sup>43</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 339: ‘non fiat protractio in puncto metri sed pausa conveniens et equalis.’

<sup>44</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 339: ‘In quolibet choro sint duo cantores, unus ex una parte et alius ex alia parte, qui distribuunt singulas antiphonas per singulos fratres, unusquisque in parte sua.’

<sup>45</sup>Van Dijk (1963), pp. 339–40: ‘Responsoria nocturna et diurna cantent fratres in stallis suis sicut et antiphonas, ubi libri sufficientes habentur. Ubi autem unus tantum habetur, vadant ad cantandum in medio chori communiter.’

<sup>46</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 344: ‘In festo vero novem lectionum et in diebus dominicis invitatorium et ultimum responsorium et *Alleluia* in Missa, semper dicantur a duobus ad pulpitum in medio chori. Versiculi vero et *Benedicamus* ab uno dicantur in stallo suo.’

candle bearers, then the thurifer and finally the priests.<sup>47</sup> After the *Gloria patri*, accolites would deposit their candles and sit ‘in the last seats of the choir, next to where the friars were sitting’.<sup>48</sup> The censuring of the choir would begin with the cantors around the lectern, then the friars in the stalls starting with the ebdomadarian, who would probably be seated at the western end of the choir.<sup>49</sup>

During mass, the passing of the peace would begin from the priest, who would pass to the deacons, who would then pass to the subdeacons, then the accolytes, who would pass it ‘to the first two in the choir’, starting with the hebdomadarian.<sup>50</sup> In order to receive communion, the friars were ordered to start ‘from the head of the choir, proceed two by two in an orderly fashion, and, whilst genuflecting, receive communion’.<sup>51</sup> The Franciscan ceremonial shows that friars had their own seat within an important hierarchy of the community. The arrangement of the choir in two ranges facilitated both the antiphonal singing of psalms and the organisation of processions in two rows.

### 3.2.3 Dominican Liturgy

On his election to master-general in 1254, Humbert of Romans was ordered to correct and revise Dominican liturgical books and arrange the entire office.<sup>52</sup> The result, his *Ecclesiasticum officium*, contained fourteen books rubrics for mass and office, and lists of hymns, antiphons and readings.<sup>53</sup> A copy in the British Library, dated to 1358–63, has been partially transcribed by Galbraith, giving valuable insights into the use of choir stalls by Dominicans.<sup>54</sup> The Dominican ceremonial is similar in many respects to the Franciscan version, except for a greater reliance on the prior indicating relevant moments to sit, stand

<sup>47</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 346: ‘hoc ordine chorum ingrediantur: primo precedant cantores, deinde ceroferarii, tertio turibularius dextera manu portans turibulum et sinistra incensum, ultimo sacerdos coram altari procedens’.

<sup>48</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 346: ‘in ultimis chori locis iuxta fratres resideant’.

<sup>49</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 347: ‘Deinde turificetur sacerdos in loco suo, postea vero cantores congregati a pulpitu, postea fratres in choro, ita quod a parte ebdomadarii inchoetur’.

<sup>50</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 355: ‘Diacomus, accepta pace a sacerdote, det eam subdiacomo, subdiaconus accolito, accolitus duobus primis in choro, incipiens a parte ebdomadarii’.

<sup>51</sup>Van Dijk (1963), p. 358: ‘fratres ceteri a capite chori incipientes, bini et bini ordinate procedant et flexis genibus communicent’.

<sup>52</sup>William R. Bonniwell, *A History of the Dominican Liturgy 1215–1945*, 2nd Edition (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1945), p. 83.

<sup>53</sup>The books are Instructions for Divine Office and Mass; Martyrology; Collectarium; Processional; Psalter; Breviary; Lectionary; Antiphonary; Gradual; Pulpitary; Conventual Missal; Book of Epistles; Book of Gospels; and Missal for Private Mass. Bonniwell (1945), pp. 86–94.

<sup>54</sup>British Library, Additional ms. 23,935 has been consulted by the present author. G. R. Galbraith, *The Constitution of the Dominican Order 1216–1360* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1925), p. 203.

or genuflect.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the Matins of the Virgin, for example ‘when they came to their seats, at a signal from the prior, they genuflected for a while saying *Pater noster* and *Credo in deum* and again, at a sign made by the prior, they rise’.<sup>56</sup>

As in the Franciscan statutes, during the psalms the Dominicans were obliged to stand only whilst singing: ‘at the first psalm let one choir sit [and] at the second stand and similarly let the other choir sit’.<sup>57</sup> As in modern choral practice, they were instructed that ‘in the middle of the verse a mediation with a pause is to be observed, not drawing out the voice at the pause or at the end of the verse, but, as it was said, let it be terminated briefly and succinctly’.<sup>58</sup> The ceremonial listed misdemeanours to be avoided in the choir—including singing or reading badly, gazing around, or laughing—reinforcing the solemnity of choir space.<sup>59</sup>

One of Humbert’s books, the *Pulpitary*, was intended to be placed on the choir lectern for use by one, two or four cantors according to the solemnity of the service.<sup>60</sup> For example, after the *Magnificat* in first Vespers, the prior processed to the central lectern to sing the prayer of office.<sup>61</sup> Strict hierarchy was observed in the choir, as explained in the instructions for censuring during the Mass. Deacons censured the friars in the choir starting from the right side, and proceeding from the oldest in the upper seats to the youngest in the substalls, before moving on to the left side.<sup>62</sup> The text emphasises both the superiority of the right range over the left, and of the upper seats over the lower.

The Dominican liturgy also included some unique features. At the end of Compline, friars would form a solemn procession whilst singing the antiphon *Salve Regina*, a tradition which developed in Bologna in the early thirteenth century.<sup>63</sup> The singing friars processed

<sup>55</sup>Brooke noted the similarity between liturgy of the two orders. Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 263.

<sup>56</sup>Galbraith (1925), p. 206: ‘et cum ad sedes suas venerint, facto signo a prelato flexis genibus, vel inclinati pro tempore, dicant *Pater noster* et *Credo in deum* et iterum, facto signo a priore, surgant.’

<sup>57</sup>Galbraith (1925), p. 207: ‘ad primum psalmum sedeant unus chorus et ad secundum stet et similiter sedeant alter chorus et sit alternent usque ad *Laudate Dominum de celis*.’

<sup>58</sup>Galbraith (1925), p. 205: ‘ut in medio versus metrum cum pausa servetur non protrahendo vocem in pausa vel in fine versus, sed, ut dictum est, breviter et succincte terminetur’.

<sup>59</sup>Galbraith (1925), p. 218: ‘si quis in choro male legendo vel cantando offendens non statim se coram omnibus humiliaverit . . . si quis divino non intentus officio vaguis oculis et motu irreligioso levitatem mentis ostenderit . . . si in choro riserit vel alios ridere fecerit’.

<sup>60</sup>Bonniwell (1945), p. 92.

<sup>61</sup>Bonniwell (1945), p. 133.

<sup>62</sup>Bonniwell (1945), p. 384: ‘postea fratres in choro a dextris incipiens et ab antiquioribus in sedibus superioribus, [a] junioribus vero in sedibus inferioribus se girando, si fuerint ibi Fratres, proseguendo thurificationem in utroque choro; deinde [Fratres] laicos.’

<sup>63</sup>In 1221 in Bologna, the *Salve Regina* procession first took place to rid one of the friars of an evil spirit.

behind two acolytes to the nave, bowing their heads while passing under the crucifix on the rood screen. After returning to the choir, the hebdomadarian scourged the bare backs of the friars in memory of St Dominic's nightly self discipline.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.2.4 Liturgy in Cathedrals

The Statutes of the Cathedral of Novara, near Milan, were compiled in 1352 and contain valuable information about secular liturgical practices.<sup>65</sup> Although the medieval stalls of Novara no longer survive, the detail and completeness of the statutes warrants their inclusion.<sup>66</sup> In the Statutes, the canons were ordered to wear tunics (*cotha*), which they could not put on or remove in choir without incurring a fine.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, canons had to wear special stockings and boots when using the choir lectern.<sup>68</sup> Canons were instructed not to converse in the choir, especially with laymen<sup>69</sup> and women were not allowed in the choir during divine office.<sup>70</sup>

When canons entered the choir they were not permitted to cross over to the other side and could only sit on the upper stalls, indicating the importance of bipartite division.<sup>71</sup> There were fines for canons who started to read during the mass before the reading of the epistle, or during the psalms in mattins and vespers.<sup>72</sup> In addition, canons on each range were not allowed to sing from two books simultaneously.<sup>73</sup> Various statutes governed the times when canons were obliged to stand, including in Prime and other offices during the

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Bonniwell (1945), pp. 149–50.

<sup>64</sup>Bonniwell (1945), pp. 161–64.

<sup>65</sup>The statutes are transcribed in Cosimo Damiano Fonseca, 'Vescovi, capitoli cattedrali e canoniche regolari', in *Vescovi e diocesi in Italia dal XIV alla metà del XVI secolo. Atti del VII convegno di storia della chiesa in Italia (Brescia, 21–25 settembre 1987)*, ed. by Giuseppina de Sandre Gasparini et al. (Rome: Herder, 1990). I am grateful to Julian Gardner for making this text known to me.

<sup>66</sup>The Romanesque cathedral of Novara was destroyed and replaced starting in 1861. Marina Dell'Omo, *La Cattedrale di Novara. Arredi e decorazioni dal Cinquecento all'Ottocento* (Turin: Eda, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 112: 'Item nullus canonicorum dum cantatur offitium induat et exuat cotham in choro... Item ut canonici in quocumque ordine fuerint in matutinis, missa et vespertinis horis sine chotis sedes chori non intrent permansuri.'

<sup>68</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 128: 'Item statuerunt ut nullus canonicorum presumat servire altari sine et caligis vel ocreis... similiter nec ad lectorile quod est in medio chori in matutinis videlicet missis nec in vesperis.'

<sup>69</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 112: 'Item ut in choro omnes a confabulationibus temperent et maxime laichorum.'

<sup>70</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 113: 'Item ut muliere non intrent chorum dum dicitur ibi offitium.'

<sup>71</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 113: 'De non transeundo de una parte chori ad alteram... Item ut quicumque canonicorum ingressus chorum transiverit de una parte... Item ut canonici constituti in sacris non sedeant in sede inferiori chori.'

<sup>72</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 113: 'Item statuimus ut nullus de canonicis presumat legere in missa antequam evangelium dictum fuerit nec in matutinis et vesperis donec psalmi dicuntur.'

<sup>73</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 113: 'Item ut non cantetur in duobus libris simul ab uno choro.'

*Pater noster*, *Credo*, collect and preces.<sup>74</sup>

In Novara Cathedral, the choir was an important focal point for liturgical processions, which both began and ended in the choir. Canons who were not in the choir before the procession were considered absent for that ceremony, as were those who, at the end of the procession, left the choir area before all the canons had returned.<sup>75</sup> The seating hierarchy expressed by the choir stalls could have ordered the sequence of the procession.

The *Liber Ordinarius*, a thirteenth-century ceremonial for Padua Cathedral, has been transcribed in full in a recent volume.<sup>76</sup> Although mainly listing readings and motets for the year, the first part of the manuscript deals with procedures for liturgical services. The location of the choir in the medieval cathedral, which was completely rebuilt in the late sixteenth century, was described as ‘before the high altar’.<sup>77</sup> The choir was divided into two ranges, from which an equal number of singers or canons would perform parts of the liturgy. For example, during the service of matins on major and minor feast days, ‘three or four *scolares* from each side of the choir sing *Benedicamus* in the centre of the choir’.<sup>78</sup> The psalms were chanted antiphonally, ‘from one side of the choir and from the other’.<sup>79</sup> The centre of the choir was also occupied by a large candelabrum and bell used by the bishop in solemn Vespers.<sup>80</sup>

The stalls reflected the hierarchy of the community, as during the high mass, incensing was conducted ‘from each side of the choir starting at the major [canons] down to the minor’.<sup>81</sup> The last rubric in the document states that ‘laymen must not stand or sit in the choir of canons during the divine office, but must sit below in the body of the church’.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 114: ‘Item similiter non sedeant quando dicuntur in prima vel aliis horis Pater noster, Credo in unum Deum et colecte et preces.’

<sup>75</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 118: ‘Item qui non fuerit in choro antequam canonici ituri in processionibus in ecclesia sive extra ecclesiam recedant a choro, habeatur pro absente pro illa processione . . . Item similiter in reversione a dictis processionibus ille qui recesserit a choro antequam omnes canonici intraverint chorum, habeatur pro absente ut supra.’

<sup>76</sup>Padua, Biblioteca Capitolare, ms. E57, transcribed in Giulio Cattin and Anna Vildera, eds, *Il “Liber Ordinarius” della chiesa padovana*, Fonti e ricerche di storia ecclesiastica padovana no. 27 (Padua: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica padovana, 2002).

<sup>77</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 17: ‘in choro ecclesie ante altare maius’. An image of the medieval cathedral appears in the fresco of the *Calling of Matthew* in the Padua Baptistry by Giusto de’Menabuoi dated to 1375–78. Bettini (1960), p. 34.

<sup>78</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 31: ‘tribus vel quatuor scholaribus ab utroque latere chori, qui cantant Benedicamus in medio choro.’

<sup>79</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 28: ‘et proseguendo psalmos ab uno latere et ab alio chori.’

<sup>80</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 27: ‘candelabrum quod est in medio chori iuxta tripodes . . . et pulsatis campanis episcopus descendit in medio choro.’

<sup>81</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 22: ‘ab utroque latere chori incipiendo a maioribus usque ad minores.’

<sup>82</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 199: ‘layci non debent stare vel sedere in choro clericorum ad divinum

### 3.2.5 Conclusions

Analysis of liturgical statutes from religious and secular orders in northern Italy reveals several common factors applicable to choir precincts. Ritualistic requirements influenced the plan of the furniture, its construction and decoration. Choirs were divided into two ranges, facilitating processions, antiphonal singing of psalms and the observation of hierarchy amongst the religious community. This bipartite division was also reflected in stall-back decoration which in some choirs was in iconographic pairings, further reinforcing hierarchical arrangements.

Statutes decreed that friars, monks or canons had their own stall in the choir, which could have impacted on the design of the furniture. Whether displaying intarsia panels or Gothic tracery, most stall-backs displayed slight differentiations. A conspicuous example is the choir of San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna, where intarsia panels alternate between cityscapes and cupboards containing ecclesiastical items.<sup>83</sup> The alternating light and dark backgrounds and distinctive iconography would have enabled friars to have easily identified their place. Even seemingly monotonous Gothic stalls such as those in San Zeno in Verona have subtle differences in the traceried stall-backs and carved cornice, which could have allowed monks to identify their particular stalls. Some contracts specified that choirs should have diverse decoration, enabling both visual variety and ease of identification.

All the statutes analysed here prescribed when friars, monks or canons were obliged to stand or sit during divine office. The Franciscan and Dominican orders gave permission for friars on one range of the choir to sit whilst friars on the opposite range sang the psalm, conditioning their viewing of images.<sup>84</sup> Furniture dimensions indicate that stall-backs were designed to be visible while the stall was occupied by a seated person and photographs of stalls occupied by standing and seated figures illustrate this sophisticated ergonomic design (although the figure in the photographs is probably slightly smaller than the average fifteenth-century Italian male).<sup>85</sup>

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officium, sed debent stare inferius in corpore ecclesie'.

<sup>83</sup>The visual effect of this alternation was noted in Fabbri (1976), p. 148.

<sup>84</sup>Presumably one side would sing a whole psalm at a time, rather than singing alternate verses which is common practice in choirs today.

<sup>85</sup>The figure in the photographs is 1590mm high. The average height of men in northern Europe in the Middle Ages was 1714mm, according to an analysis of skeletal remains. However, at the eve of the industrial period average heights in Europe clustered around 1640mm to 1650mm. Although Steckel's study did not incorporate data from Italy, increased urbanisation would have made men slightly smaller than the

An effective example is the choir of the Frari in Venice, where stall-backs comprise two panels depicting carved saints above intarsia cityscapes. When the stall is occupied by a standing figure, the intarsia panel is obscured, but both panels are clearly visible when the person is seated (Fig. 111). In the Frari, singing friars on one side of the choir could have seen both panels of the stalls on the opposite side, whose occupants would have been seated. Such decoration could have provided interest during certain parts of divine office. All friars would stand during the most solemn parts of the service, obscuring decoration which in some cases was non-religious and distracting. Significantly, in the Frari, when the friars were standing they could see the images of saints, while the more secular intarsia cityscapes would be concealed.

Stalls were ergonomically designed for the two positions of standing and sitting, enabling the occupant to rest their arms in both attitudes: on the seat-capping whilst standing and in the quadrants whilst seated. Woodworkers designed stalls with these functions in mind, as shown by note on the contract drawing for the stalls in San Petronio in Bologna (Fig. 96) which referred to where ‘one rests the arms [whilst] standing’.<sup>86</sup> A survey of measurements of north-Italian choir stalls shows that the height of seat-capping in male houses was relatively constant, showing that the seats were designed with standing figures in mind.<sup>87</sup> Stalls in female houses had significantly lower seat-capping, showing that woodworkers altered their designs according to their patrons.<sup>88</sup> Misericords, which enabled a halfway measure between sitting and standing, generally did not feature on Italian stalls.

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European average, since in general city living had an adverse effect on health. Richard. H. Steckel, ‘Health and Nutrition in the Preindustrial Era: Insights from a Millenium of Average Heights in Northern Europe’, *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series*, no. 8542 (October 2001), pp. 16, 17, 19, 38, table 2.

<sup>86</sup>Zucchini (1942), p. 162: ‘El precio ultimo si è trenta lire cho la pizola dal bracale in 30 donde se posa le brace siendo [stando] in pedi.’

<sup>87</sup>In a survey of measurements of 33 choirs in northern Italy dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the average height from the ground to the top of the seat-capping is 1030mm, and ranges from 970mm to 1090mm. This accords with the average height of seat-capping of 1060mm in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century English stalls of Ripon, Manchester and Beverley. Tracy (1990), p. 27.

<sup>88</sup>In the Benedictine nuns’ church of San Zaccaria in Venice, the height of the arm rests is 955mm; in the Tempietto Longobardo in Cividale of the same order the height is 970mm; and in Sant’Antonio in Polesine in Ferrara of the same order the height is 910mm.



### 3.3 Misericords in Italian choir stalls

Few art historians have attempted to explain the absence of misericords (projecting rests on the undersides of swing seats) on the majority of Italian stalls.<sup>89</sup> Misericords allowed occupants to rest on the protruding brackets during long services, giving the impression that they were still standing. They are ubiquitous across Europe, being present in English, French, Belgian, German,<sup>90</sup> Swiss, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish stalls.<sup>91</sup> In north-European stalls, misericords often depicted genre scenes or lewd images which Christa Grössinger argued counterbalanced the solemnity of religious services.<sup>92</sup> In this section, I will present the few Italian stalls with misericords and discuss reasons for their scarcity. The discussion will inevitably involve stalls outside the area of northern Italy, since the issue affects furniture across the country.

Stalls of various periods in the regions of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta display misericords, which are however less sophisticated than many north-European examples. Giovanni Romano included misericords in his survey of stalls from this region, but did not account for their presence.<sup>93</sup> Early fourteenth-century stalls at the Cathedral of San Giusto at Susa, near Turin, have simple misericords portraying bearded men and birds.<sup>94</sup> Misericords can be seen in the stalls of the abbey church at Novalesa, dated to the first half of the fifteenth century;<sup>95</sup> in Aosta Cathedral dated to 1469;<sup>96</sup> in the Collegiata di Sant'Orso in 1487 (Fig. 112);<sup>97</sup> and the abbey church at Staffarda from the 1520s.<sup>98</sup>

Due to their geographical location, woodworkers in the regions of Piedmont and Valle

<sup>89</sup>Grössinger commented that 'misericords existed in most West-European countries before the Reformation except in Italy, where the only medieval examples are in Aosta, in the mountainous area of north Italy,' but did not provide any explanations. Grössinger (1997), p. 15. Dorothy and Henry Kraus offered the following possible reasons: 'shortage of wood, lack of early experience in wood-carving, in which northern countries had a strong tradition, late retention of stone seats because of the more clement weather.' Dorothy and Henry Kraus, *The Hidden World of Misericords* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd, 1976), p. 185.

<sup>90</sup>The Rhineland region of Germany has over 300 richly carved narrative misericords, including some fine examples in Cologne Cathedral from the early fourteenth century. Elaine C. Block, *Misericords in the Rhineland* (Lakewood, Ohio: R. D. Sheldon Enterprises, Inc, 1996), pp. 3, 45–91.

<sup>91</sup>Block has surveyed the Gothic misericords in Iberia, present in two Portuguese and fourteen Spanish churches. They are extremely rich in narrative carvings, having over twice as many narrative misericords per ensemble as French stalls. Block (2004), p. 1.

<sup>92</sup>Grössinger (1997), p. 73.

<sup>93</sup>Romano (2002).

<sup>94</sup>Romano (2002), p. 26.

<sup>95</sup>Romano (2002), p. 36.

<sup>96</sup>Romano (2002), p. 171.

<sup>97</sup>Romano (2002), p. 226.

<sup>98</sup>The choir is now in Turin, Museo Civico d'Arte antica, with parts in Pollenzo, San Vittore. Romano (2002), p. 268.

d'Aosta relied heavily on influence from French, Swiss and German sources. In some cases close parallels can be made with furniture outside Italy, for instance between the choirs of Susa Cathedral and Erfurt Cathedral,<sup>99</sup> and between the choirs of the Collegiata di Sant'Orso and Weingarten and Constance by Heinrich Iselin.<sup>100</sup> In other cases, northern woodworkers assisted in the making of choirs in this area: stalls from Asti Cathedral were signed by Baldino da Surso, but a Swiss or German artist carved some of the stall backs.<sup>101</sup> In the fifteenth century, Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta formed part of the Duchy of Savoy, made an independent Duchy by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund in 1416. Consequently, the region was particularly receptive to artistic ideas from France, where misericords were common. In addition, late sixteenth-century misericords of Santa Maria delle Passione in Milan (Fig. 113),<sup>102</sup> and seventeenth-century examples in the abbey church of Chiaravalle in Milan fall within this geographical sphere of influence.<sup>103</sup>

It has not yet been recognised that several Italian choirs for the monastic Carthusian order also display misericords. Carthusian choirs in regions across Italy, from Piedmont to Calabria, from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, exhibit the supports. A full survey of Italian Carthusian churches is problematic as many are now out of use and deprived of their original furniture.<sup>104</sup> In other cases, the presence of misericords cannot be ascertained due to the poor state of available literature and images.<sup>105</sup> In particular, few early stalls survive from northern Italy, but later examples from outside this region can indicate earlier furniture traditions.

A prominent north-Italian example is the choir of the Certosa di Pavia, constructed from 1487.<sup>106</sup> Misericords project to form roughly triangular shapes, with carved putti on

<sup>99</sup>Romano (2002), p. 32.

<sup>100</sup>Romano (2002), p. 230.

<sup>101</sup>The stalls are now in the Pinacoteca di Asti. Romano (2002), p. 108.

<sup>102</sup>Stalls completed by the same workshop as those in Santa Maria delle Passione also have misericords. An image in the Conway Library of the Courtauld Institute of Art from Sammlung Wv. Dirksen, Berlin, shows stalls with very similar perspective arches decorated with mother-of-pearl, from an auction at Rud. Lepke's Kunst-Auctions-Haus (date not given), cat. 40.

<sup>103</sup>The stalls were executed in 1645 by Carlo Garavaglia. Forcella (1896), p. 85.

<sup>104</sup>The Certosa di Pontignano is now a conference centre attached to the Università degli Studi di Siena. <http://www.unisi.it/servizi/certosa/> (accessed 5 November 2008). The Certosa di Capri is a museum and concert venue. <http://www.capricertosa.com/> (accessed 5 November 2008). The Certosa di Calci near Pisa currently houses the Museo di storia naturale e del territorio. <http://storianaturale.museo.unipi.it/> (accessed 5 November 2008).

<sup>105</sup>I have been unable to confirm the presence of misericords in the Certosa di San Martino in Naples, the Certosa di Veduggia near Belluno, and the Certosa di Garegnano near Milan.

<sup>106</sup>On 28 April 1487 an agreement was reached with Bartolomeo de Poli di Modena to construct the choir of the monks and conversi in the Certosa di Pavia, although the contract itself does not survive. Beltrami

the undersides (Fig. 114). They are placed at various heights on the stalls, an uncommon feature which could reflect differing heights of the monks.<sup>107</sup> The choir of the Certosa di Galluzzo in Florence displays Gothic micro-architecture and plainly carved semi-circular misericords (Fig. 115).<sup>108</sup> Dated to the early 1460s, the choir was cited in the contract for the choir of the Certosa di Calci, near Pisa, which had to be ‘beautiful and good like that of the monastery of Florence’, although the misericords themselves were not mentioned.<sup>109</sup> The Pisan choir survives and is an accurate replication of the Florentine version, with the same Gothic stall backs and simply carved misericords (Fig. 116).<sup>110</sup> A fourteenth-century choir in the Certosa di Banda, near Villar Focchiardo in Piedmont has misericords in the shape of half moons.<sup>111</sup> Although many choirs in this region have misericords, it is significant that they were also present in the Carthusian church.

Misericords also appear on surviving late fifteenth-century stalls in the Certosa di Bologna, now situated in the chapel of San Giuseppe to the left of the apse (Fig. 117). Originally the main choir of the church, the majority of the stalls were burned in 1527.<sup>112</sup> The choir of the *conversi* or lay brothers in the Certosa di Padula near Potenza in Campania is dated to 1507 and exhibits misericords under the swing seats (Fig. 118).<sup>113</sup> The monks’ stalls probably also had misericords given their presence in the *conversi* choir.<sup>114</sup> Stalls in the Certosa di Serra San Bruno in Calabria, dated to the late nineteenth century, also have simply carved misericords (Fig. 119).<sup>115</sup> The choir in the Certosa di Vedana near

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(1924), p. 77.

<sup>107</sup>On stall N21 a section of the intarsia border next to the misericord has been replaced, suggesting that it is a later addition.

<sup>108</sup>Barbara Scantamburlo, *La tarsia rinascimentale fiorentina. L’opera di Giovanni di Michele da San Pietro a Monticelli* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 2003), p. 110, fig. 61.

<sup>109</sup>A document from the Certosa di Calci, dated 12 May 1462, notes the commission of a choir to Jacopo di Marco da Villa Basilica which had to have thirty-six seats and be ‘bello e bono como quello de monasterio de Firenze in modo che non ve ne sia niuna differentia se non in beza’. Scantamburlo (2003), p. 98.

<sup>110</sup>An image of the choir showing the misericords is in Aristo Manghi, *La Certosa di Pisa* (Pisa: Mariotti, 1911), figure opposite p. 52.

<sup>111</sup>Romano (2002), pp. 84–92.

<sup>112</sup>The fire was started by Lanzichenecchi del Borbone on his way to the Sack of Rome in 1527. Restored in 1934, this choir later served for the *conversi*. Raule (1961), p. 58.

<sup>113</sup>Above the first three stalls on the left as one enters the choir is an inscription which reads ‘SI CUPIS OPIFICEM MIRO DECORE JOANNES CONDIDIT IN GALLUS INTUS ET EXTRA CHOROS 1507’. Mario De Cunzo and Vega de Martini, *La Certosa di Padula* (Florence: Centro Di, 1985), p. 58. A misericord is visible in an image of the stalls in the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, Neg. no. A69/562.

<sup>114</sup>In Carthusian churches, the choir of the lay brothers would be situated to the west of the monks’ choir, from which it would be separated by a screen. Archdale A. King, *Liturgies of the Religious Orders* (London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1955), p. 10. I have not been able to confirm if the monks’ choir in Padula had misericords.

<sup>115</sup>Misericords are visible in the image at <http://www.certosini.info/immaginicertosine/displayimage.php?album=72&pos=12> (accessed 5 November 2008). The church was rebuilt and the monastery revived

Belluno exhibits misericords, and is dated to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (Fig. 120).<sup>116</sup> The exclusive use of misericords in Carthusian churches is exemplified by the case of the Savona Cathedral choir, which was contracted as an imitation of the Certosa di Pavia choir.<sup>117</sup> Although the finished stalls were similar in most respects, they do not have misericords, demonstrating their uniqueness to the Carthusian order.<sup>118</sup>

As misericords were comfort aids during long religious services, their use was intrinsically tied to liturgical practices. In the above discussion of ceremonial guidelines, clear instructions were given for standing and sitting during services, but none referred to misericords. However, ceremonial guidelines for the Carthusian order gave directions on their use, affirming that they were specifically associated with their liturgy.<sup>119</sup> The first revision to the Carthusian statutes, known as the *Statuta antiqua ordinis cartusiensis*, was compiled in 1259 and contained numerous references to seating positions.<sup>120</sup> For example, in the chapter on general customs in church, monks were instructed to lean on the misericords or the *forma* (the kneeler or parapet in front of the stalls) when they first entered, and remain there until the oration.<sup>121</sup> In general, monks could lean at less solemn or passive sections of the liturgy, such as during orations and while the priests were carrying holy water.

Subsequent liturgical publications, including both official statutes and books for everyday use during the mass and office, maintained these strict guidelines. A breviary printed in

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between 1889 and 1899 following an earthquake of 1783 and subsequent suppression of 1807. James Hogg, 'La Certosa di Serra San Bruno', *Analecta Cartusiana* 40 (1977), p. xiv–xv.

<sup>116</sup>The stalls were made by the woodworkers Bribano Egizio Mussoi (1856–1941) and Francesco Frescura (1841–1930). Pellin does not give the exact date of the choir but it must date to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century considering the dates of the artists. Antonio Pellin, *La Certosa di Veduggia nei dintorni di Belluno* (Rome: Bodoni, 1951), pp. 48–49.

<sup>117</sup>Contract dated 30 January 1500: 'illius lignaminis pulcritudinis qualitatis altitudinis et conditionis quales sunt scanzele constructe et existentes in ecclesia cartusienesi extra civitatem Papie'. Giulia Fusconi, 'Il coro dell'antica Cattedrale di Savona come replica del coro della Certosa di Pavia', *Studi di Storia delle arti* 1 (1977), pp. 92, 97n.

<sup>118</sup>The absence of misericords on the Savona Cathedral choir stalls has been confirmed by Dr. Paolo Pacini, the official responsible for ecclesiastical property at the Ufficio dei beni Culturali di Savona. I am extremely grateful to Stefania Gerevini for obtaining this information.

<sup>119</sup>Du Cange (1954), vol. 5, p. 410: 'Misericordiae: sellulae erectis formarum subselliis appositae, quibus stantibus senibus vel infirmis per misericordiam insidere conceditur, dum alii stant'.

<sup>120</sup>The first customs, known as *Consuetudines Guigonis* were compiled by Dom Guigo in c. 1127; the *Statuta Antiqua* was compiled in 1259; a third edition, called the *Nova Statuta*, was written in 1368; the *Tertio Compilatio* was published in 1509. James Hogg, 'The Evolution of the Carthusian Statutes from the *Consuetudines Guigonis* to the *Tertio Compilatio*', *Analecta Cartusiana* 99 (1989), no. 1, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup>*Statuta antiqua ordinis cartusiensis*, chapter 37: 'De consuetudinibus in ecclesia... Ingressi vero stamus in sedibus nostris versa facie ad altare: donec ad misericordias, vel super formas prout tempus postulat ad orationem inclinemur.' Hogg (1989), no. 1, p. 124. This version published by Hogg is a facsimile of an edition published on 15 January 1510 by printer John Amorbach, which belonged to the English community of Sheen Anglorum.

Venice in 1491 for the monastery of Santi Girolamo e Bernardo in Padua contained references to misericords, confirming their use in fifteenth-century northern Italy.<sup>122</sup> Following the Council of Trent, the four main compilations were brought together into one edition, the *Nova Collectio Statutorum*, the first section of which—the *Ordinarium Cartusiense*—was first published separately in 1582.

In the *Ordinarium Cartusiense*, the chapter on the celebration of Divine Office precisely dictated when monks were required to stand, sit, genuflect or lean upon the misericords. They were obliged to kneel or genuflect on the *forma* or kneeler in front of the stalls whilst saying the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* before the office; during the *Gloria Patri* up to *sicut erat*; after *Deus in auditorium* and during the *Preces* in each office.<sup>123</sup> However at certain important festivals, which included every day from Easter to Pentecost and the vigil of Christmas, monks could lean on their misericords.<sup>124</sup> The ceremonial also lists further occasions, including during the reading of three lessons in matins, in which monks had to ‘stay leaning on the misericords with covered heads, only the priest standing’.<sup>125</sup>

Other occasions when the misericords could be used included during the *Preces* and their corresponding prayers in all the offices of the day, and during the prayers said after *Laudes* and *Vespers*.<sup>126</sup> During the singing of the canticles such as the *Magnificat*, *Te Deum* and *Benedictus*, monks were required to stand facing the other side of the choir ‘by no means must we lean, or be near our seats, but reverently stand erect’.<sup>127</sup> During parts of the office on non-solemn days, monks were allowed to sit, always in a neat manner,

<sup>122</sup> *Breviarium Ordinis Carthusiensis* (Venice: Andreas Torresanus de Asula, 1491), p. 13: ‘sequuntur orationes: quarum dum prime dicuntur stamus versa facie ad altare: ad sedas vero super misericordias inclinamus’.

<sup>123</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), pp. 79–80: ‘Pro quo notandum quod per totum annum flexis genibus, super formas procumbentes, dicimus (Pater noster, & Ave Maria) ante omnes Horas, & Gloria Patri usque ad Sicut erat, post Deus in auditorium, & preces ad omnes Horas, cum suis orationibus.’

<sup>124</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), pp. 80–81: ‘Exceptis diebus occurrentibus à Pascha usque ad octavam Pentecostes inclusive, in quibus praedicta dicimus inclinati super misericordias, seu sedes nostras: sicut & alio tempore quibuscumque diebus duodecim lectionum, incipiendo à primis Vesperis inclusive usque ad Completorium sequentis diei inclusive, & omnibus diebus à vigilia Natalis Domini, incipiendo à Laudibus eius inclusive, usque ad Completorium octavarum Epiphaniae inclusive, & per totas octavas Corporis Domini, Visitationis, Assumptionis, & Nativitatis genitricis Dei, sancti Ioannis Baptistae, SS. Apostolorum Petri & Pauli, & sancti Patris nostri Brunonis, incipiendo a primis Vesperis dictarum solennitatum inclusive usque ad Completorium octavarum inclusive.’

<sup>125</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), p. 83: ‘manemus super misericordias inclinati capitibus coopertis, solo Sacerdote stante, dum cantat Deus in adiutorium.’

<sup>126</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), p. 96: ‘Ad orationes quae post Laudes & Vesperas dicuntur . . . ad omnes omnium Horarum preces cum suis orationibus, super misericordias inclinamur’.

<sup>127</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), p. 85: ‘nullo modo debemus inniti, vel adhaerere sedibus nostris, sed erecti ac reverenter stare.’

holding their heads straight and not leaning back on the stall.<sup>128</sup>

Directions for standing, sitting, kneeling or leaning reflected the solemnity and importance both of the constituent part of the service, and of the day in the liturgical calendar. This gestural hierarchy ranged from standing during the canticles, to leaning on misericords during certain preces and prayers, to sitting during the psalms on non-solemn days.<sup>129</sup> Misericords could also be used during periods of celebration, when monks were allowed some physical comfort.

Since services were particularly long in the Carthusian tradition—because they did not shorten or abbreviate their chant singing—misericords were vital to alleviate fatigue.<sup>130</sup> The ceremonial cited the supports as normal seating features due to the French origins of the order. St Bruno founded the first Carthusian monastery in southern France, near Grenoble, and this Grande Chartreuse was the mother church of the order.<sup>131</sup> As misericords were ubiquitous in French church furniture, their use would have been incorporated into the order's statutes, which were subsequently observed by Italian houses.

A liturgical explanation for the presence of misericords in Carthusian choirs does not however completely account for their absence in other churches. Liturgical writings for the Benedictine, Cassinese, Franciscan, Dominican orders and cathedrals set rules for sitting and standing, but made no allowance for leaning on misericords. Indeed, the Franciscan 'Statuta Sixtina', written by Pope Sixtus IV in the late 1460s instructed that friars 'must not stand leaning but erect in the office of the Virgin'.<sup>132</sup> Franciscan, Dominican and Benedictine stalls outside Italy had misericords, despite following the same guidelines. For example, the Franciscan church in Fribourg in Switzerland has misericords dated to c. 1280, but no Italian Franciscan choirs display these elements (Fig. 121).<sup>133</sup>

In Italy, misericords also feature in the choir of Palermo Cathedral (Fig. 122). However, their presence can be attributed to the patron of the choir: Archbishop Nicolò Pujades, from

<sup>128</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), pp. 93–94: 'Quoties autem sedendum est tibias curare debemus religiose componi: & sic caput rectum tenere, ut in alteram partem sedis non reclinetur.'

<sup>129</sup> *Ordinarium Cartusiense* (1641), p. 91: 'Sedemus autem in Conventu diebus non solennibus, ad Psalmos primi & secundi Noctuni, & ad Psalmos Laudum alternatim.'

<sup>130</sup> King (1955), p. 33.

<sup>131</sup> King (1955), p. 18.

<sup>132</sup> P. Livarius Oliger, 'Statuta Sixtina An. 1469', *Miscellanea Francescana* 45 (1945), p. 113: 'Non stent insuper appodiati sed erecti in officio Virginis.'

<sup>133</sup> Paul Leonhard Ganz and Theodor Seeger, *Das Chorgestühl in der Schweiz* (Frauenfeld: Huber und Co., 1946), p. 99.

Barcelona. He commissioned the choir in 1466 in a Catalan style and possibly to Catalan craftsmen, evidently requesting the comfort aids he was accustomed to in Barcelona.<sup>134</sup> This example underlines the importance of local cultural tradition in the development of misericords; by the fifteenth century they were simply considered standard features in north Europe and Spain.

As we have seen, the production and morphology of Italian church furniture was isolated from the rest of Europe and few northern craftsmen ventured south of the Alps. The Carthusian case highlights the connection between misericords and liturgy, but their presence in Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta also indicates the importance of north-European influence on stall morphology. Misericords were omitted from most Italian stalls due to differing local liturgies and manufacturing practices which were isolated from the rest of Europe. Whereas in northern Europe and Spain misericords became an independent genre of carving, the Carthusian case in Italy indicates that they were still tied to liturgical functions, being plainly carved and devoid of decoration. The isolation of the Italian peninsula from earlier medieval developments created a unique local tradition of stall design, lacking the playful carvings on misericords common throughout the rest of Europe.

### 3.4 Musical practice in the choir

Liturgical practices closely affected the arrangement and design of stalls in northern Italy, but less well documented was the performance of music in the choir. Who performed music in the choir, where precisely did they sing? This discussion will incorporate other items in the choir precinct such as lecterns and organs. Stalls, organs and choral music were often commissioned at the same time, showing patterns of patronage centered around improvements to liturgical and musical practices.

In the fifteenth century, singers in the choir could stand in various formations: in the stalls; around attached lecterns in the stalls; or around the large central lectern. All three arrangements were employed in various contexts by different officiants, showing the versatile use of the church furniture. From the fourteenth century, singing from large choirbooks was common, but before this period singing would have been largely done from

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<sup>134</sup>Giuseppe Bellafore, *The Cathedral of Palermo* (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, 1976), p. 108.

memory.<sup>135</sup> The Franciscan ceremonial instructed that psalms should be sung from the stalls, with the two ranges facing each other. Statutes from the Franciscan and Dominican orders and the two cathedrals directed that the central choir lectern could be used by a solo cantor or a small group of cantors, who would sing large sections of the daily service.

Choir contracts sometimes requested attached lecterns, stipulating one, two or even three on each range.<sup>136</sup> Extant lecterns are attached to the fourteenth-century stalls in the Tempietto Longobardo in Cividale and the mid-fifteenth-century stalls in Trogir Cathedral. In addition to the central marble lectern in Cividale (dated between the eighth and ninth centuries), on each range three small lecterns are attached to desks in front of the stalls (Fig. 123).<sup>137</sup> They each have two slanting desks, enabling them to be used both by nuns in the stalls and novices perched on the swing seats below. Revealing a disregard for whether nuns faced the same direction, books could be read from both sides of the lecterns. The nuns' great wealth was manifested not only in their richly carved furniture, but in the number of attached lecterns which could support twelve books in total.

At Trogir Cathedral, two larger lecterns were attached to each range, each formed of two slanting faces (Fig. 125). They were decorated with similar carved motifs as the choir stall-backs, with Gothic openwork tracery gable ends appearing between the slanting desks. It is not known exactly when these smaller lecterns would have been used, but their presence again indicates the use of numerous books.

The presence of large central lecterns is attested by contracts, illustrations and notable survivals.<sup>138</sup> Central lecterns could have two or three slanting desks and were often pivotable around the stem. Examples of fifteenth-century central lecterns exist in San Zeno in Verona, San Colombano in Bobbio, Sant'Anastasia in Verona, and the Duomo

<sup>135</sup>James W. McKinnon, 'Representations of the Mass in Medieval and Renaissance Art', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31, no. 1 (1978), p. 31. The large size of choirbooks is shown by an antiphonary from San Francesco in Brescia, now in the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo in Brescia (ms. 8 SF) which measures 620 x 460mm when closed. Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 16, fig. 3.

<sup>136</sup>For example, the 1383 contract for the choir of Santa Maria di Carmine in Padua requested four lecterns, two for each side: 'cum quatuor letorilibus, videlicet cum duobus letorilibus pro quolibet latere'. Sartori (1961), p. 23.

<sup>137</sup>For the marble lectern, see Giuseppe Z. Zanichelli, 'Codice e arredo liturgico nel Medioevo', in *Arredi liturgici e architettura* (Electa, 2007), p. 94, fig. 20.

<sup>138</sup>The lectern at San Petronio in Bologna was donated in 1474 by Nicolò Sanuto, and a detailed contract exists describing its size and decoration: 'una bello e degno legile... lungo piè sette, alto piè dui e meglio, largo duo piè et meglio... cum 4 quadri da ogni lato et uno per ogni testa, li quadri debiano essere di disegni a casamenti'. Transcription from Maria Verga Bandirali, 'Una famiglia cremasca di maestri del legno: i De Marchi da Crema', *Arte lombarda* 10 (1965), p. 58.



Nuovo in Brescia. Lecterns were often constructed by the same workshop as the stalls, but they could be dissimilar in style and technique suggesting the employment of different workshops.

For example, the lectern in the fifteenth-century choir of Santa Giustina in Padua displays carved Gothic tracery panels which contrast with the intarsia stalls. Similarly, the lectern in the Reggio Emilia Cathedral is decorated with intarsia *a buio* panels and classical pilasters, while the accompanying choir stalls feature Gothic architectural details and simple intarsia patterns. Intarsia lecterns were sometimes decorated with images of musical notation on the slanting desks, in an intriguing interrelationship between form and function. In a contract for the lectern of Parma Cathedral (which no longer survives), the craftsmen Cristoforo Canozi and Pierantonio degli Abati were required to inlay two images of open books on the slanting desks.<sup>139</sup> Evidently patrons appreciated the pleasing visual interaction between real liturgical books and intarsia depictions.

Notable lecterns with musical decoration exist at Santa Maria in Spilimbergo and Santa Maria in Organo in Verona. The Spilimbergo lectern (now located in Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone) was completed in the same campaign as the stalls, constructed by the Cozzi workshop between 1475 and 1477. The eight-sided base was decorated with the same intarsia panels as the stall-backs, while the two-sided desk was inlaid with musical notation of two motets, complete with texts and staves (Fig. 129). One side depicts the gradual ‘Hec dies quam fecit dominus exultemus et laetemur in ea’ (this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it), sung at Compline and Vespers during Easter week, with verses changing every day.<sup>140</sup> The other side of the lectern was decorated with the antiphon ‘Sancta Maria succurre miseris’, perhaps in reference to the Marian dedication of the church.<sup>141</sup> It is tantalising to wonder whether the two texts, which contrast greatly in mood, were ever sung directly from the inlaid music. If Furlan’s reconstruction of the choir

<sup>139</sup>The contract is dated 10 August 1471 but has not been transcribed in full. Bagatin (2004), p. 268.

<sup>140</sup>David Hiley, *Western Plainchant. A Handbook* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 29–30.

<sup>141</sup>The full text is ‘Sancta Maria succurre miseris iuva pusillanimes, refove debiles, ora pro populo, int[er]veni pro clero, intercede pro devoto femineo sexu: senti[a]nt omnes tuu[m] juvamen q[ui]cumq[ue] celebrant tuam commemorationem.’ Transcription from Furlan, Casadio and Ciol (1997), Appendix p. 177. In its present location in the church of SS. Giuseppe e Pantaleone in Spilimbergo, it was not possible to see this side of the lectern. I have not been able to ascertain exactly when this antiphon would have been sung. It was composed by Bishop Fulbert of Chartres (ca 951–ca 1029), and appears in the Roman Breviary for various Marian feasts. <http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/BVM/SMSuccurre.html>, accessed 27 May 2009.

is correct, the text of *Hec dies* would have appeared on the eastern side of the lectern, so singers would have faced west, towards the lay congregation.<sup>142</sup> Whereas it is unlikely that notation on stall-backs was ever sung, intarsia music on lecterns could feasibly have been sung as its location made it significantly easier to read.

In the Olivetan church of Santa Maria in Organo in Verona, the intarsia lectern was constructed by Fra Giovanni da Verona after the stalls in 1500–01.<sup>143</sup> On a three-sided base inlaid with liturgical cupboards and animals, the stem supports a two-sided desk. Each side depicts trompe l’oeil intarsia images of open music books containing motets. The two texts portrayed are the Marian antiphons ‘Regina Coeli’ (Fig. 130) and ‘Alma Redemptoris Mater’ (Fig. 131),<sup>144</sup> two of the four Marian antiphons sung at the end of the Compline office during the four seasons of the year.<sup>145</sup> *Regina Coeli* was sung from Compline of Holy Saturday until None on the Saturday after Pentecost inclusive and *Alma Redemptoris Mater* from the first Vespers of the first Sunday in Advent to Compline on the feast of the Purification.<sup>146</sup> The two antiphons were inlaid on the lectern due to their frequent use or association with the dedication of the church.<sup>147</sup> As the final pieces of music to be sung in the last office of the day, the monks could have removed their choirbooks from the lectern altogether and sung directly from the intarsia notation.

Images of liturgical books on lecterns established a visual play between decoration and function. When in use, the lectern supported a liturgical book, revealing the same image when the book was removed. Monks could have sung directly from the inlaid notation or the images could have acted simply as trompe l’oeil puzzles. Pertinent liturgical texts could also appear on stalls themselves. Petricioli has shown that certain carved Gothic inscriptions from antiphons to St Francis and the Virgin could have originally been located

<sup>142</sup>Furlan, Casadio and Ciol (1997), Appendix p. 177.

<sup>143</sup>Bagatin (2000), p. 73.

<sup>144</sup>The full texts read: ‘Regina caeli, l[a]etare, alleluia. Q[ui]a q[ue]m meruisti portare, alleluia. Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia. Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia. Ora pro nobis sa[n]cta dei genitrix, alleluia. Ite digni efficia(?)’ and ‘Alma Redemptoris Mater qu[a]e pervia c[a]eli porta manes, et stella maris, succurre cade[n]ti, su[r]gere q[ui] curat, populo; tu q[ua]e genuisti, natura mira[n]te, tuu[m] s[an]c[tu]m Genitorem, Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave, peccator[um] miserere.’

<sup>145</sup>The other two antiphons are ‘Salve Regina’ and ‘Ave Regina’. The four antiphons date from the eleventh century and were in common use since the thirteenth century. Richard H. Hoppin, *Medieval Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1978), p. 104. Hiley (1993), p. 104.

<sup>146</sup>R. Steiner, ‘Alma Redemptoris Mater’, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (2003), pp. 297–98 and R. J. Snow, ‘Regina Coeli (Queen of Heaven)’, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (Gale, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>147</sup>The ‘Alma redemptoris mater’ was the most popular of the Marian antiphons in the Middle Ages, but all the antiphons were popular with composers who set them to elaborate polyphonic compositions. Hoppin (1978), p. 104.

on the choir cornice in St Francis in Zadar.<sup>148</sup>

Initial decorations in Italian liturgical manuscripts of the fifteenth century often depicted clergy or religious around central lecterns, singing from large choirbooks intended to be read by four or five singers at once.<sup>149</sup> These illustrations were not intended to provide accurate descriptions, but they contain certain authentic details which suggest that they were derived from observation. For example, an image in a late fifteenth-century antiphonary from the Benedictine Cassinese monastery of Torrechiara near Parma shows monks singing around a lectern (Fig. 124).<sup>150</sup> One of the monks indicates the ‘tactus’ by raising his left hand, a simple beat which could be conveyed by vertical hand movements, a technical detail within the image that implies direct observation.<sup>151</sup>

In the early sixteenth-century miniature from Brescia described at the start of this chapter, details such as cords and weights used to hold the book open shows that the artist was familiar with the practical use of the lectern (Fig. 101).<sup>152</sup> Two acolytes to the right of the image indicate that a procession has just past the lectern, possibly at the start of a mass, giving an insight into when lecterns were used. An earlier Brescian miniature depicts six canons singing from a carved Gothic choir lectern, which again mirrors the style of the stalls behind (Fig. 126).<sup>153</sup> Cords and weights hold the book open on the lectern, while another book rests on the chest. Both miniatures give a sense of the enclosed and intimate atmosphere in the precinct. These manuscript illustrations depict unoccupied choir stalls behind the singers, suggesting that the whole community, or at

<sup>148</sup>The three inscription fragments are now in the church museum. The texts are from an antiphon to St Francis written and composed by Julian of Speyer and from a canticle to the Virgin Mary. Petricioli (1972), pp. 33–34.

<sup>149</sup>Jonathan J. G. Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page. Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450–1550* (London and Munich: Prestel, 1994), p. 227. Manuscripts in which depictions of liturgical events appear tended to be Graduals and Antiphonaries, books which were only used by the cantors and choir. Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A guide to their organization and terminology* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 123.

<sup>150</sup>Antiphonary F, from the Badia di Torrechiara, illustrated in Angelo Ciavarella, *Rassegna di corali miniati e libri liturgici. Manifestazioni del V centenario della Badia di Torrechiara* (Parma: Tipografia Benedettina, 1972), p. 24, fig. 8.

<sup>151</sup>Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, eds, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 6, p. 261.

<sup>152</sup>Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, M 45 (from collection of Paolo Tosio). Attributed to either Francesco (c. 1450 to before 1515) or Girolamo (1474/5–1555) dai Libri. Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 18, fig. 4.

<sup>153</sup>Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, MS 11D, c. 158v (from the cathedral of Santa Maria de Dom). Antiphonary, dated to 1469. Illustration from Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 16, fig. 2.

least most members, would have stood around the lectern on certain occasions.<sup>154</sup> However, since liturgical sources dictated that only a handful of cantors would use central lecterns, miniatures are not wholly reliable sources of ceremonial practice. Illustrators were faced with a compromise between representing believable architectural spaces and figures in the foreground.<sup>155</sup> Artists might also have wished to play on the visual interaction between the painted book in the miniature and the book in which it appeared.

### 3.4.1 The performance of music and professional choirs

In addition to daily chant singing and improvised polyphony performed by church communities, the fifteenth century saw a significant development of professional choirs, known as chapels or *cappelle*. Chapels consisted of professional male voices singing the parts of tenor, countertenor and soprano, sometimes augmented by boy trebles.<sup>156</sup> They were paid to sing polyphonic compositions on Sundays and major feast days in the wealthiest cathedrals and churches in northern Italy.<sup>157</sup> Boys were not paid so they did not appear in documentary records, but the presence of a ‘*magister capellae*’ referred to their teacher.<sup>158</sup>

Since musicological studies of northern Italy are scarce, a well-documented Florentine example gives us insights into the responsibilities of a chapel in this period. The chapel of San Giovanni in Florence, which was founded in the 1430s, sang at the Baptistry and Cathedral as well as with the Servite friars at the Santissima Annunziata. In a contract with the Santissima Annunziata, the chapel was obliged to ‘rehearse those things they themselves sing in the Church, whether it be a Mass, a motet, or a Magnificat, etc., and that is for every occasion on which they must sing in the Church, not only on feast days,

<sup>154</sup>See for example an antiphonary dated to 1469 in Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, MS 11D, c. 158v (from the cathedral of Santa Maria de Dom). Illustration from Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 16, fig. 2.

<sup>155</sup>Mainly working on north-European manuscript illustrations, McKinnon cited images in which singers in stalls were portrayed to either side of choir, with cantors in copes and occasionally choir boys in the centre around the lectern. This reflects liturgical practice as prescribed by certain ceremonials. McKinnon (1978), p. 44.

<sup>156</sup>Frank A. D’Accone, ‘The Performance of Sacred Music in Italy during Josquin’s Time, c. 1475–1525’, in *Josquin des Prez. Proceedings of the International Josquin Festival-Conference held at The Juilliard School at Lincoln Center in New York City, 21–25 June 1971*, ed. by Edward E. Lowinsky (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 603. Castrati were only introduced into Italian society from Spain in the late sixteenth century. Christopher A. Reynolds, ‘Sacred Polyphony’, in Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie, eds, *Performance Practice. Music before 1600* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 189.

<sup>157</sup>Polyphonic choral compositions began to become more common around 1430. Howard Mayer Brown, ‘Choral Music in the Renaissance’, *Early Music* 6, no. 2 (1978), p. 164.

<sup>158</sup>Nino Pirrotta, ‘Music and Cultural Tendencies in 15th-century Italy’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 19, no. 2 (1966), p. 133.

but also on ferial days'.<sup>159</sup> They had to sing 'together with the other singers of the Convent', presumably providing the polyphonic parts to plainchant settings.<sup>160</sup>

Chapels of singers are also recorded in cathedrals in northern Italy. In cathedrals, polyphony was performed by the *chorarii* and *mansionarii* attached to cathedral chapter, and sometimes by the canons themselves.<sup>161</sup> Music schools attached to cathedrals began to appear in the 1430s following foundation bulls issued by Pope Eugenius IV.<sup>162</sup> Boys were educated in music and later admitted to sing in liturgical services. Music in cathedrals, civic churches and wealthy monastic and mendicant churches would have been rich and varied, performed by members of the religious community, boys from the school, and professional chapels of polyphonic singers.

D'Accone has shown that the number of singers in professional chapels increased towards the end of the fifteenth century. Before the 1470s, most chapels comprised a handful of singers who performed polyphony; the chapel of Modena Cathedral, for example, consisted of four adults and an unspecified number of boys.<sup>163</sup> Expansion of professional chapels was witnessed in Treviso Cathedral, which had three adult members in 1463, rising to eight in 1488–91.<sup>164</sup> This general increase was perhaps due to the influence of large court chapels or the requirements of more demanding compositions. It is intriguing that the late fifteenth century also witnessed construction of some of the most impressive and costly choir precincts. Rather than a causal link between furniture and musical practices, the correlation shows a general ambition to improve both the musical and physical setting of the liturgy. Both new furniture and singers' salaries required significant financial outlays, sometimes forming part of the same pattern of patronage.

Specific case studies highlight the close relationship between patronage of stalls and musical chapels. At San Petronio in Bologna, the musical tradition had been strong since

<sup>159</sup>The contract is dated 1 May 1482. Frank A. D'Accone, 'The Singers of San Giovanni in Florence during the 15th Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14, no. 3 (1961), p. 333.

<sup>160</sup>D'Accone (1961), p. 333.

<sup>161</sup>Giulio Cattin, 'Church patronage of music in fifteenth-century Italy', in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Patronage Sources and Texts*, ed. by Iain Fenlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 22.

<sup>162</sup>Pope Eugenius IV started new cathedral schools with bulls in Turin in 1435, Bologna and Florence in 1436, Treviso in 1437–8, Padua and Urbino in 1439 and Verona in 1440–2. Cattin (1981), p. 23.

<sup>163</sup>This data is for the period 1472–77. D'Accone (1976), p. 602.

<sup>164</sup>In 1463 there were three adults members; in 1472–6 an average of four adults and an unspecified number of boys; and in the period 1488–91 there were eight adults and not more than five boys. D'Accone (1976), pp. 603, 606.

the institution of a choral school and a professional cantor in 1436.<sup>165</sup> Payments were recorded for organists and cantors up to 1474, then the musical patronage appeared to halt until 1479 when six new singers arrived.<sup>166</sup> During this interval, the choir stalls, which were made between 1467 and 1477, would have been constructed in the church.<sup>167</sup> The richness of the intarsia furnishings would have complemented the elaborate polyphony performed by the chapel. This period also saw the construction of a new pulpit in 1470<sup>168</sup> and a new organ in 1474.<sup>169</sup> The addition of choir stalls was part of a wider campaign to improve the musical and liturgical life of the church.

Similarly, at Modena Cathedral, the completion of stalls in 1465 was followed by an enhancement of the musical situation. A handful of chapel singers were noted in the 1450s, but in 1472 payments were made to more singers, most of whom were foreign.<sup>170</sup> In this period the *maestro della cappella*—maestro Adriano—composed motets for four or five parts, to be sung by the well-established chapel.<sup>171</sup> As in Bologna, the construction of wooden stalls and the increasing financial support of music formed part of the same period of patronage.

### 3.4.2 Organs

Improvements in the physical and musical setting of divine office also incorporated new organs. As well as contributing to the richness of the liturgy, organs lightened the load for singers. There is no conclusive proof that organs accompanied voices; instead D’Accone argued that choir and organ would have alternated verses.<sup>172</sup> Arnaldo Morelli has shown that this necessitated the placing of organs near the choir, either on the side walls of the precinct, between nave columns, on tramezzi, or on perimeter walls at the height of

<sup>165</sup>On 4 October 1436, Pope Eugenio IV established the roles of *scolastico* and *cantore*. Gaetano Gaspari, ‘La musica in San Petronio’, *Atti e memorie della regia deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna* 9 (1870), p. 2.

<sup>166</sup>On 22 March 1479 a document records ‘Christoforo spetiario a peregrino . . . iohanni Antonio pecora de Mediolano, et quatuor suis socijs cantoribus qui venierunt Bon, ut viderent si officiales vellent eos conducere pro Ecclesia sancti Petronij in cantores et in magistros puerorum’. Gaspari (1870), p. 18.

<sup>167</sup>Bandirali (1965), p. 54.

<sup>168</sup>Bandirali (1965), p. 59.

<sup>169</sup>On 9 May 1470 the Signoria di Bologna gave 600 *lire* for a new organ, which was made by Lorenzo di Giacomo da Prato and finished 4 years later. Gaspari (1870), p. 10.

<sup>170</sup>Gino Roncaglia, *La cappella musicale del Duomo di Modena*, vol. 5, “Historiae Musicae Cultores” Biblioteca no. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1957), p. 12.

<sup>171</sup>Roncaglia (1957), p. 12.

<sup>172</sup>D’Accone (1976), p. 617.

the stalls.<sup>173</sup> However, in addition to their close physical proximity, choirs and organs were sometimes commissioned together, forming part of the same liturgical and musical renovation.<sup>174</sup>

In the fifteenth century, organs were documented in cathedrals and civic churches as well as monastic and mendicant foundations. Some religious orders considered them luxurious and frivolous, and in 1438 their construction was banned by the Benedictine Cassinese order.<sup>175</sup> However, this did not stop Cassinese churches purchasing organs; several churches were granted permission to construct organs in the 1450s,<sup>176</sup> and the church of Santa Giustina in Padua commissioned a new organ in 1493.<sup>177</sup>

In several cases, organs were commissioned as part of the same pattern of patronage as choir stalls and other musical improvements. At San Petronio in Bologna, the woodworker Agostino de' Marchi, who had made the intarsia stalls, was also involved in the decoration of a new organ. The instrument itself was constructed by Lorenzo di Giacomo da Prato between 1471 and 1475 but Agostino de' Marchi was employed to make the parapet of the pulpit on which it stood.<sup>178</sup> The fifteenth-century organ is still playable, but was moved from its original location below the arch of the fifth nave bay on the right to the right wall of the presbytery in 1659 (Fig. 127).<sup>179</sup> Its manufacture and decoration involved

<sup>173</sup> Arnaldo Morelli, 'Sull'organo et in choro'. Spazio architettonico e prassi musicale nelle chiese italiane durante il Rinascimento', in *Lo spazio e il culto. Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, ed. by Jörg Stabenow (Marsilio, 2006), p. 213.

<sup>174</sup> For example, see Massimo Bisson, 'La collocazione degli organi nelle chiese veneziane del Rinascimento: implicazioni architettoniche, liturgiche, musicali e acustiche,' in Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, eds, *Architettura e Musica nella Venezia del Rinascimento* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2006), pp. 297–322.

<sup>175</sup> General Chapter of 4 March 1438: 'ordinamus quod de cetero in nostris monasteriis, que antiquitus non consueverunt habere organa, non fiant'. If organs were already present in the church, monks were not allowed to play them and they must only be sounded on major feast days: 'per fratres nostros minime pulsantur, quorum non permittantur...et ubi consueverunt pulsari, non nisi in maioribus duplicibus pulsantur.' Leccisotti (1939), p. 58.

<sup>176</sup> Giulio Cattin, 'Tradizione e tendenze innovatrici nella normativa e nella pratica liturgico-musicale della congregazione di S. Giustina', *Benedictina* 17 (1970), p. 260.

<sup>177</sup> Maestro Leonardo del fu Alvisè da Salisburgo was commissioned to make the new organ in Santa Giustina on 12 April 1493. ASP, Santa Giustina, busta 491, ff. 1–2. Giustino Prevedello and Pio Nocilli, *L'organo della basilica di S. Giustina di Padova. Cenni storici e progetto di restauro* (Padua: Abbazia di S. Giustina, 1973), p. 13.

<sup>178</sup> Luigi Frati, *I corali della Basilica di S. Petronio in Bologna* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1896), p. 11. Frank Tirro, 'Lorenzo di Giacomo da Prato's organ at San Petronio and its use during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', in *Essays Presented to Myron P. Gilmore. Volume II: History of Art, History of Music*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli and Gloria Ramakus (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1978), p. 493. Andrea Emiliani, ed., *Il restauro degli organi di S. Petronio*, Quaderni della Soprintendenza per i beni artistici e storici per le province di Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì e Ravenna no. 5 (Bologna: Quaderni, 1982), pp. 30, 47.

<sup>179</sup> A later organ, built by Baldassarre Malamini in 1596, was originally situated opposite the fifteenth-century organ in the nave, but was also moved to the presbytery in 1659. Emiliani (1982), pp. 18, 20.

many different craftsmen employed to construct, carve and gild its extant Gothic tracery *cassa*, supporting pulpit and parapet.<sup>180</sup> Agostino's parapet no longer survives, but it is intriguing to consider whether it formed a visual interaction between the choir stalls and musical instrument.<sup>181</sup> At San Petronio in the late fifteenth century, a new organ was built, funding was increased for the musical chapel (as noted above) and new choirbooks and a lectern were commissioned.<sup>182</sup> The construction of new choir stalls did not occur in isolation but formed part of an overall renovation of the liturgical and musical life of the church.

Intarsia panels in Modena Cathedral, signed and dated by Cristoforo Canozzi in 1477, probably formed part of an organ balcony, although some scholars have doubted this claim.<sup>183</sup> The panels, which depict the four evangelists (Fig. 128), are now detached from the organ which was built by Giovanni da Mercatello in 1461–64.<sup>184</sup> Since Cristoforo was paid in 1477 for gold for the 'puzolo', and an early seventeenth-century register described the evangelists 'which were on the old organ', we can be reasonably certain of their provenance.<sup>185</sup> The organ was situated on the north wall of the presbytery but was replaced in 1767 with a new instrument installed in the central nave.<sup>186</sup>

The serene portraits of the evangelists would have interplayed with the intarsia stall-backs, which depicted perspective scenes of cupboards and architectural vistas. The organ was built contemporaneously with the choir and Cristoforo designed the organ balcony immediately after completing the stalls in 1465, but construction work did not begin until 1471.<sup>187</sup> The choir and organ both played crucial roles in the musical performance of the

<sup>180</sup>The traceried *cassa* was carved by Ercole di Francia and gilded by Giovanni da Ravenna; the doors were by Tommaso Garelli; the parapet by Agostino de Marchi da Crema; and the painting of the pulpit and parapet was by Tommaso di Alberto Garelli. Emiliani (1982), p. 30.

<sup>181</sup>A new baroque exterior case was installed in 1686. Tirro (1978), p. 493.

<sup>182</sup>Fрати noted this renewal of the musical life of San Petronio and commented that it might have been initiated by the appointment in 1471 of Galeazzo Marescotti de'Calvi to the office of Camerlengato della Fabbrica di S. Petronio. The miniaturist Taddeo da Ferrara was contracted in 1476 to illustrate Graduals for whole liturgical year, and Agostino de Marchi was commissioned to make a lectern in 1474. Frati (1896), pp. 12, 17–21.

<sup>183</sup>Beneath the image of St John is an inscription which reads 'CHRISTOPHORUS DE LENDENARIA HOC OPUS FECIT 1477'. Manni (2001), p. 171. Baracchi and Manni conclude that the panels originate from the organ, but Bagatin is less sure since there is no definitive contract. Bagatin (2004), p. 381.

<sup>184</sup>Manni (2001), p. 171.

<sup>185</sup>The register of the Fabbrica from 1606 describes 'per havere fatto condurre gli Evangelisti... che erano all'horgano vecchio'. Bagatin (2004), p. 381.

<sup>186</sup>Bagatin (2004), p. 154.

<sup>187</sup>Payment records show that Cristoforo was provided with paper to make sketches for the organ balcony on 3 April 1465: 'per dieci foie de charte per fare el disegno del puzolo delorgano ave maestro Christofano da Lendenara'. On 21 May 1471, work had begun: 'a maestro Christofano da Lendenara per tre pianchone



liturgy and their congruous decoration reinforced this link.

Renovations of the artistic and musical setting of the liturgy also took place in mendicant churches. In 1488, the Franciscan convent of San Francesco in Rovigo appealed to the *Consiglio di Rovigo* for funds to construct new choir stalls costing 600 ducats.<sup>188</sup> According to Pacioli, the choir was commissioned to Giovanmarco, son of Lorenzo Canozi, but it is certain that the stalls were inlaid.<sup>189</sup> Presumably when the stalls were completed, in 1492 the friars requested additional funding for a new organ, described as ‘large beautiful and expensive’.<sup>190</sup> Neither the stalls nor the organ survive to demonstrate their physical proximity or any visual similarities.<sup>191</sup> However, it is fascinating that choir and organ were commissioned within a few years, giving an insight into musical practices in the mendicant context.

The musical function of choir stalls suggests that their design improved the projection of sound. Certainly wood itself has good acoustic properties and stalls with shell-niche canopies could reflect vibrations forwards.<sup>192</sup> Restorations of Italian stalls have not discovered sounding jars or pierced stone bases underneath the choir structure, which might have improved acoustics in north-European choirs.<sup>193</sup> Italian singers in this period, however, did have an appreciation for the science of acoustics, and could adjust their voice to different situations. Documents show that singers sang with a loud *cappella* voice for church and a softer *camera* voice for chamber music.<sup>194</sup>

dise voleva adoperare al puzolo delorgano’. Orianna Baracchi, ‘Gli organi quattrocenteschi del Duomo’, in *Il Duomo e la torre di Modena*, ed. by Orianna Baracchi and Carlo Giovannini (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1988) (hereafter referred to as Baracchi, 1988<sup>1</sup>), p. 116.

<sup>188</sup>Antonio Sartori, *Archivio Sartori. Documenti di Storia e Arte Franciscana* (Padua: Biblioteca Antoniana, Basilica del Santo, 1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1398: ‘Quod fratres conventus et monasterij seraphici S. Francisci de Rodigio sumopere desiderant construere et fabricare seu construi et fabricari facere in dicta ecclesia S. Francisci unum pulcrum corum seu sedile valoris ducatorum sexcentorum’.

<sup>189</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1398: ‘suo figliuolo Giovanmarco mio caro compare, il quale summamente patrizia comme lopere sue in Roico’. A further document dated 20 July 1488, in which the Consiglio assign 200 ducats to the choir, called it ‘unus corus tarsatus’.

<sup>190</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1398: ‘Unus organus magne pulcritudinis et expense in ecclesia S. Francisci terre rodigii.’ The appeal is dated 1 January 1492.

<sup>191</sup>The stalls were destroyed around 1753. Camillo Semenzato, *Guida di Rovigo* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1966), p. 132.

<sup>192</sup>The greatly anticipated results of the CAMERA-Ve project, which investigated the relationship between architecture and acoustics in Venetian churches, are to be published later this year. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, Yale University Press, publication date October 2009.

<sup>193</sup>For example, the mid fifteenth-century choir of Carlisle Cathedral is set on a low plinth pierced by quatrefoil ventilation holes. Tracy (1990), p. 2.

<sup>194</sup>Reynolds cites the example of a fifteenth-century Italian singer who needed to rest before he could sing in his *voce da camera* because he had just sung loudly in church. Christopher A. Reynolds, ‘Sacred Polyphony’, in Brown and Sadie (1989), p. 189.

In the late fifteenth century, a close relationship developed between the acquisition of choir furniture and the improvement of church music. This interaction is difficult to define due to scarce published sources, but case studies indicate that furniture and music could form part of the same pattern of patronage. Polyphonic choirs and new organs enhanced the performance of worship, while sumptuously decorated stalls and lecterns provided comfort and visual richness.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Choir stalls were fundamentally practical objects, intended for use during divine office. Their layout reflected the hierarchy of the church community, and their design was ergonomically tailored for various functions. Terminal and dignitaries' stalls had significant imagery which defined the limits of the choir precinct, and certain stalls close to the lectern could have been reserved for cantors. Liturgical documents showed the importance of the bipartite division of the choir, and that each member had his own seat. Displaying a close link between stall morphology and liturgical use, Carthusian stalls had misericords which were demanded by ceremonial guidelines. Lecterns could be attached to stalls or placed centrally, and were used by varying numbers of singers in the divine office. In a link with musical patronage, professional chapels were enlarged and new organs commissioned often in the same period as choir construction. These relationships show that stalls were not conceived in isolation, but were crucial components in the liturgical and musical life of the church.

Focussing on the relationship between furniture, liturgy and music has emphasised functional aspects of stalls. They were not only valued for their visual qualities but their practical purpose. As argued in Chapter One, methods used for analysing other works of art such as altarpieces might not apply to the study of choir stalls. Despite being essential liturgical items and sometimes displaying religious iconography, contemporaries viewed them as practical—albeit beautiful and expensive—additions to the church fabric. Significantly, there is no evidence of any special ceremonies for the installation of new choir furniture as there were for other items such as doors.<sup>195</sup> Some choirs were installed at

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<sup>195</sup>Church doors were blessed annually on the fourth Sunday of Easter. See Prue Richardson, 'Doors and Doorknockers: A Way into Renaissance Venetian Culture', MA thesis (London: Victoria, Albert Museum and Royal College of Art, 2008), p. 37.

Michaelmas, but this was probably to accord with the church's financial year rather than any liturgical event.<sup>196</sup>

The placement and internal arrangement of the choir was vital to the performance of liturgy and the observation of hierarchy within the religious community. Changes in choir location fundamentally changed these carefully arranged interactions between form and function. From the mid-fifteenth century, churches began to relocate stalls to areas behind the high altar, a gradual shift which will be examined in the next chapter. This rearrangement dramatically changed both the performance of the liturgy and the laity's relationship with the choir.

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<sup>196</sup>The Parma Cathedral stalls had to be installed by Michaelmas 1471 as requested in the contract: 'in fra due ani per essere terminati ala festa de san michielle per essere nel dì inaugura'. Fiocco (1913), p. 339. The Cremona Cathedral choir was due to be installed at Michaelmas 1489, as noted in Gianpietro Sforzosi's letter to the Anziani di Reggio Emilia: 'Sancto Michael proximo advenire perchè a questo tempo serà fornito el nostro choro'. Puerari (1967), p. 146n. The altarpiece frame by Giacomo del Maino for the chapel of the Immaculate Conception in San Francesco Grande in Milan had to be delivered on Michaelmas 1480. Pesenti (2005), p. 135.

## Chapter 4

# Choir placement in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries

Liturgical guidelines influenced the ergonomics of choir stalls, their bipartite division, and location in the church interior. However, this careful interaction of form and function was disturbed when choirs were arranged behind the high altar in semi-circular formations. These so-called ‘post-Tridentine’ renovations in fact gained momentum in the late fifteenth century, and as other historians have noted, the Council did not make any direct injunctions concerning the placement of choirs.<sup>1</sup> In his 1577 guidelines for church architecture, Carlo Borromeo did not clearly prescribe choir placement:

The space of the choir, separated from the space of the people, as in the ancient custom and for reasons of order, and closed by gates, having to be near the high altar, it will surround it in front (as in the old custom), or it will be found behind the altar (because the site of the church, the altar or the custom of the region so demands). It should extend in length and width how much the space allows, it may be in the form of a semicircle or another form depending on the style of the chapel and the church and according to the judgement of the architect, provided that, by its grandness and dignified decoration, it

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Lorenzoni and Valenzano asserted that ‘tale fenomeno precede di molto il Concilio di Trento’. Giovanni Lorenzoni and Giovanna Valenzano, ‘Pontile, jubé, tramezzo: alcune riflessioni sul tramezzo di Santa Corona a Vicenza’, in *Immagine e ideologia. Studi in onore di Arturo Carlo Quintavalle*, ed. by Arturo Calzona, Roberto Campari and Massimo Mussini (Milan: Electa, 2007), p. 316. Schulz also acknowledged pre-Tridentine rearrangements in Markham Schulz (2008), p. 657.

corresponds to the importance of the church and the multitude of clergy.<sup>2</sup>

Borromeo took a different approach to his own architectural renovations however, in which he consistently placed the choir behind the high altar.<sup>3</sup> In post-Tridentine Apostolic visitations, churches were rarely instructed to alter choir placement, again illustrating the gap between official decrees and practice.<sup>4</sup> Notably, Trento Cathedral itself, which hosted the Council, only removed its imposing *tramezzo* and moved its stalls behind the high altar in 1629, long after Tridentine decrees had come into force.<sup>5</sup> Reference to Trent therefore cannot provide a solution to fifteenth-century choir renovations. In a highly complex situation, new choir placements resulted from liturgical, practical and aesthetic motivations.

Art-historical research on choir placement has focussed on two interrelated arguments: reconstructions of medieval choirs and their impact on the division of sacred space; and the development of the Italian retrochoir.<sup>6</sup> The first issue was introduced by Marcia Hall's seminal 1974 article on the *ponte* in Santa Maria Novella in Florence.<sup>7</sup> She proposed the idea that *tramezzi* were large, impeding structures which dominated the church interior, revising modern perceptions of medieval sacred space. Screens were crucial in dividing liturgical space, ensuring that the friars could pass from the cloister to the choir without passing through the laymen's church.<sup>8</sup> Since the Florentine church was subject to a Vasarian

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<sup>2</sup>Book I, Chapter XII. 'Instructionum Fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae libri duo' was published by Ponzio Pacifico in 1577. Carlo Borromeo, *Arte Sacra (de fabrica ecclesiae)*, ed. by Carlo Castiglioni and Carlo Marcora (Milan: Tipografica Sociale, 1952), pp. 8, 37: 'Il luogo del coro, separato dal luogo del popolo, come vuole l'antico costume ed un motivo di ordine, e chiuso da cancelli, dovendo essere presso l'altar maggiore, lo circonda sul davanti (giusta l'antica usanza), oppure si troverà dietro l'altare (perchè così richiede il sito della chiesa o dell'altare oppure la costumanza della regione). Esso si distenda in lungo e in largo, quanto lo consente lo spazio, sia in forma di emiciclo oppure ne prenda un'altra secondo lo stile della cappella e della chiesa e secondo il giudizio dell'architetto, purchè, e per la grandezza e per la decorosa ornamentazione, corrisponda all'importanza del tempio e alla moltitudine del clero.'

<sup>3</sup>For example, Milan Cathedral in 1567 working with the architect Pellegrino Tibaldi. Fiorio (1985), p. 37

<sup>4</sup>For Venice, see Paula Modesti, 'I cori nelle chiese veneziane e la visita apostolica del 1581. Il "barco" di Santa Maria della Carità', *Arte Veneta* 59 (2002), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>The *tramezzo* is depicted in a painting of 1563 illustrated in Enrico Castelnuovo and Adriano Peroni, eds, *Il Duomo di Trento. Volume primo: Architettura e scultura* (Trento: Temi Editrice, 1992), p. 56. The date of 1629 was given by Michelaneli Mariani in his book 'Trento con il sacro Concilio', published in 1673 and cited in Castelnuovo and Peroni (1992), p. 59.

<sup>6</sup>The term 'retrochoir' is now used by scholars of Italian churches to signify a choir area behind the high altar, but originally described any large space behind the high altar, especially in north-European Gothic architecture. Cooper (2001), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>Marcia B. Hall, 'The Ponte in S. Maria Novella: The Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974) (hereafter referred to as Hall, 1974<sup>1</sup>), pp. 157–173.

<sup>8</sup>Marcia B. Hall, 'The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconstructed', *The Art Bulletin* 56, no. 3 (September 1974) (hereafter referred to as Hall, 1974<sup>2</sup>), p. 338.

remodelling from 1565, Hall linked the removal of tramezzi with Tridentine reforms, whilst admitting that ‘neither Trent nor Borromeo laid down an explicit rule that rood screens should in all cases be demolished’.<sup>9</sup> The development of less imposing screens in the fifteenth century indicated a shift in the relationship between laity and clergy, later reinforced by the Council of Trent. In a highly influential thesis, Hall linked choir renovations to liturgical requirements.<sup>10</sup>

Following Hall’s work, further studies highlighted the presence of screens in various Italian churches.<sup>11</sup> In a recent essay, Giovanna Valenzano used archival and archaeological evidence to show that mendicant churches of all orders in the Veneto had medieval tramezzi.<sup>12</sup> According to Valenzano, variations in pier capitals or nave vaulting can indicate original choir placements. In a comparison between the Benedictine church of San Zeno in Verona and Modena Cathedral, Giovanni Lorenzoni expanded the discussion of screens in cathedrals and secular churches.<sup>13</sup> Lorenzoni maintained that screens effectively divided the church into two separate churches, reserved for the laity and for the clergy.<sup>14</sup>

A recent article by Tiziana Franco demonstrated that tramezzi also existed in parish churches and rural *pieve*, debating whether such dividing structures separated laymen from laywomen, or laity from religious.<sup>15</sup> The little known choir precinct and screen of San Vittore in Bologna—occupied by the Lateran canons of San Giovanni in Monte in

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<sup>9</sup>Hall (1974<sup>1</sup>), p. 158.

<sup>10</sup>Hall developed her research in a further 1974 article on the tramezzo in Santa Croce in Florence. Hall (1974<sup>2</sup>), pp. 325–341.

<sup>11</sup>The tramezzo in Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice with its attached chapels was discussed by Merotto Ghedini in Monica Merotto Ghedini, ‘Il tramezzo nella chiesa dei santi Giovanni e Paolo a Venezia’, in *De lapidibus sententiae. Scritti di storia dell’arte per Giovanni Lorenzoni*, ed. by Tiziana Franco and Giovanna Valenzano (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2002), pp. 257–262. Descriptions of choirs in other Venetian churches as related by visitation records have been compiled by Modesti in Modesti (2002), pp. 39–65. In Verona, wall painting and discrepancies in pavement layout have provided clues for the placement of screens in the Dominican church of Sant’Anastasia and the Franciscan church of San Fermo Maggiore. Tiziana Franco, ‘Appunti sulla decorazione dei tramezzi nelle chiese mendicanti. La chiesa dei Domenicani a Bolzano e di Santa Anastasia a Verona’, in *Arredi liturgici e architettura* (Milan: Electa, 2007), pp. 115–128 and De Marchi (2007), pp. 129–142.

<sup>12</sup>Giovanna Valenzano, ‘La suddivisione dello spazio nelle chiese mendicanti: sulle tracce dei tramezzi delle Venezie’, in *Arredi liturgici e architettura*, ed. by Arturo Carlo Quintavalle (Milan: Electa, 2007), pp. 99–114.

<sup>13</sup>Giovanni Lorenzoni and Giovanna Valenzano, *Il duomo di Modena e la basilica di San Zeno* (Verona: Banca popolare di Verona- Banco S. Geminiano e S. Prospero, 2000).

<sup>14</sup>Lorenzoni and Valenzano (2000), p. 258.

<sup>15</sup>Screens in parish churches (which were less deep and high than tramezzi in mendicant churches) had a variety of uses, some dividing the choir from the main body of the church, and others placed longitudinally to separate men from women. Tiziana Franco, ‘Sul “muricciolo” nella chiesa di Sant’Andrea di Sommacampagna “per il quale restavan divisi gli uomini dalle donne”’, *Hortus artium medievalium* 14 (2008), pp. 181–92.

Bologna—shows that tramezzi were not just erected in monastic and mendicant churches (Fig. 30).<sup>16</sup> Research into the impact of screens on divisions of space has been synthesised by Michele Bacci and Sible de Blaauw, disseminating findings to a wider audience.<sup>17</sup> In a recent piece, Hall reinforced statements that tramezzi were present only in monastic and mendicant churches in Italy, maintaining that their removal was mainly due to Tridentine reform.<sup>18</sup> As choir renovations occurred in different periods, Hall suggests that individual communities decided on such changes.

Alongside reconstructions of medieval choir precincts, research has developed into the interrelated issue of Italian retrochoirs. Scholars have discovered that choirs were removed into newly built retrochoirs decades before the Council of Trent. James Ackerman used early examples such as the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, San Giobbe in Venice and new Cassinese churches of Santa Giustina in Padua and San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, to emphasise the role of monastic reform in church design.<sup>19</sup> Christian A. Isermeyer attributed the retrochoir in San Giorgio Maggiore to reformed Cassinese ideals, since most churches of this order had choirs behind the high altar by the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>20</sup> He linked the development of retrochoirs both to liturgical practices and the changing status of clergy and laity. By removing the choir behind the high altar, ‘the whole church was conceded to the laity, the priests [were] relegated to an annex outside the usable space of the church.’<sup>21</sup>

Donal Cooper and James Banker have discovered that a retrochoir existed at least by the 1350s in San Francesco in Sansepolcro, building on Cooper’s earlier work on Franciscan retrochoirs in Umbria.<sup>22</sup> Cooper saw the apsidal choir arrangement in the Upper Church

<sup>16</sup>Dating from the twelfth century and probably before the church’s consecration in 1178, the screen features a central door, two altars and is surmounted by an open colonnade. Zucchini (1917), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Michele Bacci, *Lo spazio dell’anima. Vita di una chiesa medievale* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2005), pp. 80–85. Sible De Blaauw, ‘Innovazioni nello spazio di culto fra basso Medioevo e Cinquecento: La perdita dell’orientamento liturgico e la liberazione della navata’, in *Lo spazio e il culto. Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, ed. by Jörg Stabenow (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), pp. 25–51.

<sup>18</sup>Hall stated that certain tramezzi have survived because they did not significantly impede lay participation in the Mass, or because they feature precious painting or sculpture. Marcia B. Hall, ‘The Tramezzo in the Italian Renaissance, Revisited’, in *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. by Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Cambridge, Mass.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006), p. 228.

<sup>19</sup>James S. Ackerman, ‘Observations on Renaissance Church Planning in Venice and Florence 1470-1570’, in *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, ed. by S. Bertelli, N. Rubenstein and C. Hugh Smyth, vol. 2 (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1980), pp. 287–307.

<sup>20</sup>Christian A. Isermeyer, ‘Le chiese del Palladio in rapporto al culto’, *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 10 (1968), pp. 42–58.

<sup>21</sup>Isermeyer (1968), p. 47: ‘ai laici è concessa tutta la chiesa, i sacerdoti sono relegati in un annesso fuori dello spazio fruibile della chiesa.’

<sup>22</sup>Banker and Cooper (2009). Cooper (2001), pp. 1–54.

at Assisi—built to accommodate the requirements of the papal liturgy—as a prototype for Franciscan retrochoirs in Umbria.<sup>23</sup> He showed that not all mendicant churches in central Italy originally had choirs in the upper nave. Hall reintroduced the concept of nave choir precincts back into modern scholarship, but the focus on retrochoirs has subtly redefined the overall picture.

Despite the substantial literature on pre-Tridentine choir renovations, the motivations for such a fundamental change are still little understood. Andrew Hopkins suggested that the gradual move to retrochoirs was aided by Pope Gregory XIII's abolition of mandatory choral recitation of Divine Office in 1575.<sup>24</sup> However, Beverly Brown, in her discussion of the early choir tribune at the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, showed that new choir arrangements could arise from practical and political motivations.<sup>25</sup> In an enlightening recent collection of essays on liturgical space, Jörg Stabenow summarised various factors which could affect the creation of retrochoirs.<sup>26</sup> Reasons included the liberation of the nave for aesthetic reasons, the need to see newly-placed tabernacles on the high altar, an increasing demand for prominent lay burials, and the clergy's desire for privacy.<sup>27</sup> In an analysis of Vasarian church renovations, Isermeyer cited the laity's visibility of the high altar, but also political influence.<sup>28</sup>

This chapter will add to this discussion, bringing together little-known examples of pre-Tridentine renovations in northern Italy, and concentrating on reasons for new arrangements. As we have seen, choir stalls were significant additions to the church fabric in terms of cost, decoration and function. How can this be reconciled with the increasingly widespread desire to move choir precincts to areas behind the high altar? What were the motivations for this change? What were the implications for choir stall design and use?

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<sup>23</sup>In papal liturgy the celebrant faced the congregation, making a high altarpiece an impediment. The papal throne in the centre of the apse also had to be visible. Cooper (2001), pp. 32–39.

<sup>24</sup>Andrew Hopkins, *Santa Maria della Salute. Architecture and Ceremony in Baroque Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 253n.

<sup>25</sup>Beverly Louise Brown, 'The patronage and building history of the tribuna of SS. Annunziata in Florence: A reappraisal in light of new documentation', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 25 (1981). Beverly Louise Brown, 'Choir and Altar Placement: A Quattrocento Dilemma', *Machiavelli Studies* 5 (1996), p. 164.

<sup>26</sup>Stabenow, 'Introduzione', in Jörg Stabenow, ed., *Lo spazio e il culto. Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo* (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), pp. 9–23.

<sup>27</sup>Stabenow (2006), pp. 9–23.

<sup>28</sup>Isermeyer stated that the increased predominance of the high altar over the side altars reflected a new political hierarchy, in which a ruler subordinated his subjects. Christian A. Isermeyer, 'Le chiese del Vasari e i suoi interventi in edifici sacri medievali', *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 19 (1977), p. 290.



Early choir renovations occurred in churches of different religious orders, illustrating that the practice generally did not derive from centralised legislation. Instead, a haphazard picture emerges of different churches choosing to renovate from various motivations. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of the north-Italian churches in which such renovations took place, and analyse original documentation. In-depth case studies of the Franciscan Observant church of San Giobbe in Venice, the Franciscan Conventual church of San Francesco in Brescia and the Dominican church of Santa Corona in Vicenza will provide insights into the motivations for choir renovations and their impact on sacred space. The material has been grouped according to religious orders, both for ease of understanding and to ascertain if any clear patterns emerge. The resulting picture is highly complex. Choir renovation was a gradual phenomenon, but one which dramatically changed the use of sacred space.

## 4.1 Franciscan Observants: San Giobbe in Venice

In the Franciscan Observant church of San Giobbe in Venice, construction of the retrochoir has been dated to either before 1470 or the early 1600s (Fig. 133). This wide divergence results both from confusing archival evidence and the persistence of the widespread notion that retrochoirs were a later phenomenon.

A document dated 1502 which formed litigation evidence contains a description of the first church or oratory of San Giobbe, which indicates that the choir was originally a raised *barco* above the west door. In the small church, ‘above was the *barco* where the choir sings, that had windows above the *fondamenta*’.<sup>29</sup> The *fondamenta* was next to the canal in front of the west end, locating the choir above the west door.

Following the second visit to Venice of Bernardino da Siena in 1443, Cristoforo Moro (later to be Doge) financed the rebuilding of the church, enlarging it for the increasing numbers of friars and faithful. The extant church comprises a barrel-vaulted nave flanked by four side chapels on the left; the domed *cappella maggiore* incorporating Moro’s mausoleum with two small chapels; and the long retrochoir behind. The main archival source for

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<sup>29</sup>ASV, Corporazione Religiose Soppresse, San Giobbe, busta 5, no. XLVI, fol. 44v: ‘e de sopra era el Parco dove era il Coro i Cantava, che haveva le fenestre so la *fondamenta*’. The document is dated 15–16 March 1502 and formed part of a litigation between Nicolo Nigro, representing the hospital of San Giobbe and the friars of San Giobbe.

the building is Moro's will, dated 1 September 1470, in which he left funds for the continuation of the work in lengthening—'*longarla*'—the church.<sup>30</sup> Work must have been underway before this date, but the sculptures in the *cappella maggiore*—attributed to Pietro Lombardo—probably date to the 1480s.<sup>31</sup> Moro's floor tomb appears in front of the high altar, creating a funerary chapel in the centre of the church between the laity in the nave and the friars in the retrochoir.<sup>32</sup> But what date is this extension?

In the San Giobbe archive, the first note which could refer to the retrochoir is dated 8 May 1451, when Elisabetta Bragadin donated the plot of land behind the church on which the retrochoir would be later built. The note appears in a compendium of documents compiled by Giovanni Bortolamio Milesi in 1708.<sup>33</sup> Writing retrospectively, the eighteenth-century compiler specifically indicated that the donation allowed the construction of the present choir. However, the word *coro* did not appear in the original 1451 document, cited by Cicogna.<sup>34</sup> The reason given for the donation of land was so that the friars could enlarge—'*elargare et dilatare*'—their church into the vacant land. It is not certain that work commenced immediately, but there was a clear intention to extend the church in this

<sup>30</sup>Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *La chiesa di San Giobbe in Venezia illustrata nei suoi monumenti (estratta dal Volume VI delle Inscrizioni Veneziane)* (Venice: Andreola, 1861), pp. 731–32: 'e de diti danari e trato sia compito lopera comenzada de la giexia de s. B. in longarla e far le capele secondo el bixogno e per quello, manchase al giostro dormitorio che se lavora tuto sia compito con ogni altro lavoro li hochorese far in hornamento de dita giexia e monestier... Item voio et ordeno che la giexia de ms. San Bernardino cum le capelle siano um quella solitudine sara posibel compida et fornida secondo lordene dato et che per persona alguna non se possi interomper questo mio ordine i lavori de le qual se debiano fornir per maistro antonio tajapiera de s. zacharia over per quello de s. severo'. Du Cange (1954), vol. 4, p. 139: 'longare: longum facere'.

<sup>31</sup>Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, 'San Giobbe. Architettura e decorazione', in *Tullio Lombardo. Scultore e architetto nella Venezia del Rinascimento. Atti del convegno di studi, Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 4–6 Aprile 2006*, ed. by Matteo Ceriana (Verona: Cierre, 2007), p. 198.

<sup>32</sup>The pavement tomb reads 'CHRISOPHORVS/ MAVRVS PRINCEPS/ MCCCCLXX. MENSIS SEPTEMBIS'. Cicogna (1861), p. 573. Martin Gaier, 'Il mausoleo nel presbiterio. Patronati laici e liturgie private nelle chiese veneziane', in *Lo spazio e il culto. Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, ed. by Jörg Stabenow (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), p. 163.

<sup>33</sup>ASV, San Giobbe, busta 5, fascicolo no. L, fol. 1r: '1451, 8 Mag. Donazion del Terren, dove ora è il Coro in Chiesa, fatta da Elisabetta Bragadin'. The document takes the form of a history of the convent, referring to various original documents which have since been lost. The first page gives the name of the compiler and date of the document: 'L. D. S.– 1708– In Venetia. Estratto de Tempi [e sommario] dalle Scritture e Libri della Venda Scuola di S. Bernardino da Siena in S. Giobbe, fatto da' Gio. Bortolamio Milesi attual Guardiano della medesima Scuola'. Also cited in Gaier (2006), p. 163n.

<sup>34</sup>ASV, San Giobbe, busta 5, fasc. XLIII, c. 37r, transcribed in Cicogna (1861), pp. 533–34: '1451, 8. Maii Nobilis domina Isabetta relictā viri nobilis Bartholomei Bragadeno de contrata Sancti Severi dedit tradidit donavit inter vivos in perpetuum loco Monasterio ac conventu sancti Job, sive spectabili et generoso domino Christophoro Mauro honorando procuratori S. Marci de Ultra ac viro nobili et egregio domino Marco Zane condā domini Andree de contrata Sancti Stephani confessoris asserentibus se dicti Monasterii et Conventus syndicos et procuratores... tantum de terreno vacuo dicte Isabette posito post ecclesiam Sancti Job quantum passus octo ipsius terreni vacui... ut fratres ipsius Monasterii possint et valeant ipsam ecclesiam elargare et dilatare quantum comprehendit ipsum terrenum per dictus passus octo'. Partially transcribed in Gaier (2006), p. 162n.

direction.

Confusingly, the same eighteenth-century compendium of archival sources noted that on 9 October 1607 the friars appealed to the Querini family to fund a renovation of the high altar ‘in occasion that they have made a new choir’.<sup>35</sup> Whereas the 1451 entry referred to the ‘land where now is the choir in the church’, the 1607 entry noted that new choir stalls were added, since the term *coro* generally indicated the wooden furniture itself. The stalls, which still survive in the church, could plausibly be dated to the early Seicento (Fig. 134). The half-length nude caryatids at the entrances to the choir and lion lower stall-dividers show close similarities with sacristy benches and *spalliere* in San Pietro Martire on Murano, dated to 1652–66 (Fig. 135).<sup>36</sup>

The seventeenth-century stalls in San Giobbe would have replaced the original fifteenth-century furniture, perhaps because it had been temporary, had suffered from an infestation, or was stylistically outdated. The friars evidently wanted to renovate the high altar to match their newly constructed stalls, and according to the archival compiler, this initiative was realized in the same year.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most definitive source confirming the presence of the retrochoir is the Apostolic Visitation of the bishop of Verona, Agostino Valier, in 1581. He stated that San Giobbe had ‘chorus oclusus post altare maius cum sedilibus decentibus’, confirming that the choir was behind the high altar before 1607.<sup>38</sup>

The architectural style of the apse validates this early dating. The simple brick building is rectangular in plan, decorated with a frieze of Gothic pointed arches on the side walls and a triangular gable surmounting a round-headed lancet window on the east wall.<sup>39</sup> Friezes of pointed arches in brick and white marble, albeit in a more elaborate form, also appeared on the mid fifteenth-century exterior of the Cappella dell’Addolorata on the south side of Santi Giovanni e Paolo (Fig. 137).<sup>40</sup> It is inconceivable that Gothic motifs would

<sup>35</sup> ASV, San Giobbe, busta 5, fascicolo no. L, fol. 6r: ‘1607, 9 ott. Instrumento di Andrea Spinelli Noto V. che contiene la supplica fatta della R. R. P. P. di S. Giob. al N. H. q. Zorzi Querini, et al nostro Capitolo Generale, di conceder loro licenza, che possino rinovar il nostro Altar di Chiesa, in occasione che hanno fatto il Coro da novo.’

<sup>36</sup> The carvings were completed by Pietro Morando and depict scenes from the life of John the Baptist amongst mythological figures and personifications. Alberici (1980), p. 98.

<sup>37</sup> ASV, San Giobbe, busta 5, fascicolo no. L, fol. 37v: ‘Che havendo refabricato il Coro, sia reformato l’Altar maggior’.

<sup>38</sup> Modesti (2002), p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> Changes in the exterior brickwork indicate that the windows have been altered.

<sup>40</sup> The chapel was erected in the mid-fifteenth century by the procurator of San Marco, Alvise Storlato. Franca Zava Boccazzi, *La basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venezia* (Padua: Ferdinando Ongania Editore, 1965), p. 288.

have been used in 1607, even if motivated by a desire for architectural unity. However, adding to the dating controversy is Jacopo de' Barbari's 1500 map, which depicts San Giobbe with a semi-circular apse and no retrochoir (Fig. 138).<sup>41</sup> Despite often being used as an infallible source, Barbari must have been mistaken in his depiction of San Giobbe, as he also omitted the cupola of the *cappella maggiore*. If the map is accepted, then the Lombardo reliefs and Moro tomb in the *cappella maggiore* must be redated to after 1500, significantly altering the perceived building history.

Despite this evidence, art historians disagree over the dating of the San Giobbe retrochoir. Cicogna interpreted the 1607 archival source as a reference to the architectural retrochoir.<sup>42</sup> In his 1992 article, Ceriana also dated the retrochoir to the early seventeenth century, explaining the absence of the cupola on the Barbari map as the mistake of a forgetful engraver.<sup>43</sup> The architectural historians McAndrew and Hopkins also came to this conclusion,<sup>44</sup> while Ackerman, Gaier and Finocchi Gherzi favoured the early dating, mostly based on architectural evidence.<sup>45</sup> Gaier attributes the retrochoir to the fifteenth century, placing San Giobbe in the context of other high-altar tomb chapels in Venetian churches.<sup>46</sup>

Gaier also published a document from 1583, in which the patriarch Lorenzo Priuli requested his tomb to be placed between the choir and Moro's tomb, in the area incorporating the high altar.<sup>47</sup> He requested burial rights over the area between the step of Moro's

<sup>41</sup>For the map, see Deborah Howard, 'Venice as a Dolphin: Further Investigations into Jacopo de' Barbari's View', *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 35 (1997), pp. 101–11.

<sup>42</sup>Cicogna (1861), p. 707.

<sup>43</sup>Matteo Ceriana, 'Due esercizi di lettura: la cappella Moro in San Giobbe e le fabbriche dei Gussoni a Venezia', *Annali di architettura* 4/5 (1992), pp. 23–24: 'Nel 1607 si abbatté l'abside originaria e si costruì il lungo coro attuale dietro il presbiterio'.

<sup>44</sup>John McAndrew, *Venetian Architecture of the Early Renaissance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1980), p. 135: 'The retrochoir behind the chancel is a late addition made by the friars when they became so numerous that they had to have more space.' McAndrew's posthumously published work is devoid of footnotes which might have given evidence for this statement. Hopkins claimed that the first retrochoir in Venice belonged to the church of San Francesco della Vigna, built in 1534. Andrew Hopkins, 'The Influence of Ducal Ceremony on Church Design in Venice', *Architectural History* 41 (1998), pp. 38, 48n.

<sup>45</sup>Ackerman (1980), p. 295: 'The Gothic style of the choir, matching that of the nave, apparently antedates the Lombard Renaissance style of the chancel, but perhaps only by a few years.' Gaier (2006), p. 161–65. Finocchi Gherzi argues that the term 'longarla' in Moro's 1470 will could not refer to the nave, because it has evidently not been altered since its depiction on the Barbari map. Therefore the east end of the church, or retrochoir, must have been extended. Finocchi Gherzi (2007), p. 189.

<sup>46</sup>Gaier (2006), p. 163: 'Dal punto di vista liturgico la disposizione del sepolcro davanti all'altare, con il coro dietro lo stesso, dimostra chiaramente come il Moro più che al beneficio spirituale procurato dalle preghiere dei frati tenesse piuttosto al rapporto stabilito dalla sua tomba con l'altare di san Bernardino e alla posizione privilegiata tra sacerdote e assemblea dei fedeli.'

<sup>47</sup>ASV, Notarile, Atti (Giovanni Battista Benzon), busta 417, ff. 94v–95r, dated 6 October 1583, tran-

tomb and the tombs of the choir, which are still in situ.<sup>48</sup> In addition, he requested that the high altar imitate its counterpart in San Francesco della Vigna; the construction of a tabernacle and pendant statues of Job and Bernardino; transportation of a painting (*'pala'*) from the choir; and the door moved that gave access to the choir.<sup>49</sup> These renovations were not carried out, however, because in 1589 Doge Cristoforo Moro's commissioners informed him that no other tomb could be installed in the high altar chapel except that of the doge.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the document predates the proposed dating of the retrochoir in 1607, proving that the extension was already in existence.

The retrochoir at San Giobbe, therefore, is one of the earliest of its type, and was a precedent for later Observant Franciscan churches such as San Francesco della Vigna in Venice. Priuli's request that the high altar in San Giobbe imitate the one in San Francesco della Vigna shows the continuing interrelationship between the two Observant churches. Both churches created deep retrochoirs, while the high altar chapels became important Venetian mausolea.<sup>51</sup>

In his study of Observant church planning in the province of Bologna, Cobianchi noted the lack of legislation governing the arrangement of sacred space, although most churches had traditional nave choir precincts.<sup>52</sup> A notable exception was the church of San Francesco at Cotignola (near Faenza), founded in 1483, in which stalls were arranged against the walls of the *cappella maggiore*.<sup>53</sup> In 1501, the Observant Vicar General and the Provincial

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scribed in Gaier (2006), p. 178n: 'fieri facere archam pro suo deposito [...] ubi est altare maius... incipiente a gradu qui est ultra depositum sive archam Ser.mi Principis Mauro ab uno latere ad aliud ipsius capelle usque ad linbella sepulcrorum cori per longitudinem et latitudinem prout ipse locum repperitum includendo dictum altare maius... declaravit et debeat fabricari facere altare maius presentum in ipso loco conforme altari S. Francisci a Vineia pro portione incl. exigentiam ipsius loci cum tabernaculo in midio sanctissimi sacramenti et duabus figuris una ab utroque latere videlicet s. Bernardini et s. Job et transportari facere palam que de presenti repperitur in coro ipsius ecclesiae et amovere ianuam quae facit transitum in ipso coro ponendo eam in medio pro debita portione et fieri facere in ipso loco ossia alia ornamenta quae sint conveniente ad honorem santissimi sacramenti'.

<sup>48</sup>There are three floor tombs in the choir: Pandolfo Morosini dated 1540; Angelo Marie Priuli and Adriana Venier dated 1589; and Eucaristo de Angeli dated 1570. Cicogna (1861), pp. 591–95.

<sup>49</sup>The present altar in San Francesco della Vigna was designed by Baldassarre Longhena in 1649 and incorporated two statues of Bernardino and Francis by Francesco Sansovino in 1604 (now above the two choir doors), which could have been replacements for earlier statues. Giulio Lorenzetti, *Venezia e il suo estuario : guida storico-artistica*, 2nd (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1956), p. 371.

<sup>50</sup>Cicogna (1861), p. 564.

<sup>51</sup>Venetian mausolea have been analysed by Gaier (2006), pp. 153–180.

<sup>52</sup>Roberto Cobianchi, 'Aspects of Franciscan Observant Church Planning and Decoration in the Province of Bologna, c.1403–1517', Ph.D. thesis (University of Warwick, 2004), p. 65.

<sup>53</sup>The late-Romanesque church was restored after the Second World War but the stalls no longer survive. *Emilia e Romagna* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1957) (hereafter referred to as *Emilia e Romagna* [1957]), p. 501.

Chapter decreed that the choir could remain in position behind the altar but that this arrangement should not be imitated by other churches without the express permission of the Chapter.<sup>54</sup> As Cobianchi noted, this discussion by the Provincial Chapter reveals the novelty of the situation. Significantly, the decree came from the Provincial rather than the General Chapter, showing that choir placement was not generally governed by a central body. San Giobbe and San Francesco in Cotignola seem to have the only fifteenth-century retrochoirs from this order in northern Italy, betraying an element of conservatism within the Observant Franciscan movement.

## 4.2 Franciscan Conventuals: San Francesco in Brescia

The church of San Francesco in Brescia was founded around 1254, when the Consiglio Comunale bought various properties in the area in anticipation of the building's construction. The altar of San Francesco was first recorded in 1287,<sup>55</sup> but the high altar was officially consecrated in 1335.<sup>56</sup> The choir was originally positioned in the eastern nave in front of the high altar, as attested by architectural features and documents.<sup>57</sup> Hall and Valenzano deduced that cloister doors were normally positioned on the friars' side of the tramezzo to enable easy access to conventual buildings. In San Francesco, the cloister door is to the left of the present chapel of St Francis, near the second pair of nave piers counting from the east. This position suggests that the original choir occupied the two eastern-most bays of the nave, leaving the remaining four bays for the laity.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, a later screen which separated men from women was in this position. In 1539, iron grilles [*certi ferrati*] were removed 'which crossed [the church] starting from the pulpit and from behind that pulpit going in a straight line up to the wall between the

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<sup>54</sup>Cobianchi (2004), p. 64n: 'De voluntate R. p. Vicarii generalis fr. Ludouici de la Turre ac totius Capituli provincialis conclusum est quod corus ecclesie nostre Cotignole stet post altare majus prout nunc est: sed quod nullus amodo chorus sic fiat, nisi de licentia et assensu capituli provincialis.'

<sup>55</sup>Valentino Volta et al., *La chiesa e il convento di San Francesco d'Assisi in Brescia* (Brescia: Banca San Paolo di Brescia, 1994), pp. 23. 205.

<sup>56</sup>The consecration stone reads CONSECRATIO ALTARIS MAJORIS/ CIMITERII CLAVSTRI ET PLATEAE/ INTER DVAS PORTAS/ DIE LVNAE IV ID. APR. MCCCXXXV/ FACTA FVIT/ A QVODAM EPISCOPO DE ORDINE CARMELITARVM/ NATIONE MEDIOLANENSE. Volta et al. (1994), p. 315.

<sup>57</sup>Volta discussed two options for the location of the old choir: either close to the high altar near the doorway under the organ, or closer to the centre of the nave dividing the nave into two equal parts. Volta et al. (1994), p. 40.

<sup>58</sup>The church of San Francesco is oriented on a north-south axis, with the high altar at the south end. For ease of understanding, liturgical directions are used here.

chapel of the Conception and the chapel of the nobles of Calzavegi.<sup>59</sup> The pulpit was on the fourth nave pier on the right, corresponding to the wall between the two chapels on the opposite side. The division of the tramezzo could have been reutilised to divide the sexes, confirming the location of the original choir. A further indication is the position of the original Chapel of the Crucifix, nearest to the fourth nave pier on the right.<sup>60</sup> This dedication was often associated with choir screens, and might have been moved from the screen to this nearby location. An early fourteenth-century painted crucifix in the church might also have been associated with the tramezzo.<sup>61</sup>

#### 4.2.1 The 1451 document

On 11 May 1451, the Consiglio Comunale conceded 150 ducats to San Francesco for the removal of the choir from the nave to an enlarged *cappella maggiore*. The document (see transcription and translation in Appendix B.4, p. 298) cited overcrowding during occasions of public preaching as the main motivation. The choir screen or *pontile* which traversed the nave was to be destroyed, and the stalls themselves moved to a larger *cappella maggiore*, creating a vacuous nave for the laity. The work had to imitate the newly-built chapel of San Giovanni in Brescia, probably referring to the church of San Giovanni. As one of the earliest texts referring to a choir renovation, the importance of the 1451 San Francesco document cannot be overstated. It stated that the project solved a practical problem, rather than the result of new liturgical practices. Significantly, the friars themselves decided on the scheme, not senior church authorities.

The nearby church of San Giovanni in Brescia, presumably the ‘chapel’ cited in the document, was administered by the canons of San Salvatore in Venice, and was completely rebuilt between the years 1440 and 1447.<sup>62</sup> San Giovanni was substantially rebuilt in the

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<sup>59</sup>BQB, ms. C I 15 (P. Nassino, Registro delle Cose di Brescia), fol. 509: ‘che traversavano comenzando dal pulpito et de dreto a esso pulpito et andando i domane parte dritta linea fina al muro che tra la Capella dela Conceptione et la capela de li nobili di Calzavegi’.

<sup>60</sup>In 1580, Carlo Borromeo’s visitation of San Francesco noted that adjacent to the altar of the Spirito Santo (currently fourth altar on the right side of the nave) was the altar of the Crucifix. Volta et al. (1994), p. 333.

<sup>61</sup>The crucifix is currently located in the present chapel of the Crucifix, the second on the left of the nave. Pier Virgilio Begni Redona has dated it to 1310–20. Volta et al. (1994), p. 142.

<sup>62</sup>From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries San Giovanni was administered by a provost and chapter of canons, but after the rebuilding of the 1440s the canons of San Salvatore in Venice were asked to take over its government. Gaetano Panazza, Giuseppe Dester and Giovanni Vezzoli, *San Giovanni in Brescia* (Brescia: Grafo Edizioni, 1975), pp. 18–20.

eighteenth century, but the dimensions of the fifteenth-century Gothic apse and facade survive reasonably unaltered (Fig. 139). Considering the reference to San Giovanni in the 1451 San Francesco document, it is likely that the choir was located in the apse, behind the high altar. Moreover, no architectural features such as differences in pier design indicate the presence of a nave choir. The building work was mainly funded by lay parishioners, encouraged by an indulgence for contributors granted by the pope.<sup>63</sup> The decision to locate the choir in the apse could have been facilitated by this lay involvement, correlating with similar concerns for increased lay space in San Francesco.

On 14 May 1451, a few days after San Francesco was granted funds to reorganise the church interior, celebration of the feast of San Bernardino da Siena was given civic backing. On the feast day, a procession would culminate ‘at the altar of San Bernardino situated in the church of San Francesco’.<sup>64</sup> This chapel was the second on the left of the nave counting from the west; its present architecture was built by Antonio da Zurlengo and Filippo da Caravaggio in 1483, presumably replacing a earlier chapel.<sup>65</sup> The Commune granted further provisions for the celebration of the feasts of San Pietro Martire in 1452 and San Nicola da Tolentino in 1461.<sup>66</sup> During these large events the church would have been filled to capacity, highlighting the urgent need for a reorganisation of the interior. However, despite possessing funds to realise the project, it did not resurface for another twelve years.

#### 4.2.2 The 1463 document

On 7 July 1463, the results of a deliberation the Consiglio Comunale reported a request from the Guardian of San Francesco for funds to restructure the church (see transcription and translation in Appendix B.5, p. 299).<sup>67</sup> The stated reason for the removal of the chapels and screen or *pontile* from the nave was to provide more room for preaching. Fundamentally, this extra space would be created by transporting the choir stalls to the high altar chapel. Two concerns emerge from the document. Firstly, the desire for increased

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<sup>63</sup>The indulgence was granted in 1445. Panazza, Dester and Vezzoli (1975), p. 18.

<sup>64</sup>ASBr, ASC, busta 495, fol. 213r: ‘ad altare San Bernardino sito in ecclesia San Francesco’.

<sup>65</sup>Volta et al. (1994), p. 134.

<sup>66</sup>It is notable that the Franciscan community was especially concerned with celebrating Dominican and Augustinian saints. Volta et al. (1994), p. 319.

<sup>67</sup>ASBr, ASC 500, 39v. Partially transcribed in Volta et al. (1994), p. 319.



space in the nave for public sermons, implying that more lay people could be accommodated. The second matter considers aesthetics: the nave renovations would contribute to the ‘ornament’ or beautification of the church.

The San Francesco documents clearly detail both the practicalities and reasoning behind the renovations. In a similar text to the 1451 document, the 1463 deliberation cited increased space for preaching as a major concern, raising questions about motivations for choir renovations on a more widespread level. The documents do not mention giving the laity visual access to the tabernacle containing the Host, an idea promoted by Borromeo following the Council of Trent. Rather, the San Francesco documents illustrate that the choir was moved for practical rather than liturgical reasons. In addition, moving the choir and pontile was a cheap and efficient way of creating the illusion of a larger church without the disruption of extensive building work.

Both documents mentioned public preaching, but were such events particularly popular and frequent in Brescia? The two major periods for preaching were organised alternately by the two largest mendicant orders: the Advent sermons in San Domenico and the Lent orations in San Francesco.<sup>68</sup> The Brescian civic authorities financed distinguished visiting speakers who participated in high quality and popular events. Speakers preached both in large churches and public squares, for which a temporary platform or pulpit (‘*pergolum sive pulpitem*’) was financed by the Commune.<sup>69</sup> Franciscan preachers in the fifteenth century included Alberto da Sarteano, Giacomo della Marca, Roberto da Lecce and Michele da Carcano.<sup>70</sup>

Although most of the preachers were Observant Franciscans, they also worshipped and preached in San Francesco and in non-Franciscan churches.<sup>71</sup> Significantly, during the 1440s and early 1450s, the Observant Franciscan church of Sant’Apollonio in Brescia was being restored and friars only settled there from 1457.<sup>72</sup> Consiglio deliberations praised visiting preachers and noted the popularity of their sermons: in 1438 fra Luca da Siena

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<sup>68</sup>Guido Lonati, ‘La predicazione del B. Alberto da Sarteano a Brescia (1444–1449)’, *Miscellanea Francescana* 37 (1937), p. 56.

<sup>69</sup>Lonati (1937), p. 56. In this context, the phrase should not be confused with the term ‘*pergulum*’ which could refer to choir screens in this period. Franco (2007), p. 119.

<sup>70</sup>Agostino Zanelli, ‘Predicatori a Brescia nel Quattrocento’, *Archivio storico lombardo, serie III* 15 (1901), p. 83.

<sup>71</sup>Alberto da Sarteano celebrated mass on Christmas Eve in San Francesco in 1445 and 1448, and preached in San Giovanni Evangelista in 1448. Lonati (1937), pp. 61, 74, 75.

<sup>72</sup>The church was pulled down for ‘reasons of security’ in 1517. Moorman (1983), p. 87.

preached ‘very elegantly, wonderfully and effectively’ in San Francesco,<sup>73</sup> while Alberto da Sarteano in 1445 ‘had a great audience and made much progress among the people’.<sup>74</sup> A certain Aloysius Stella was present both in a document which allocated funds to Alberto da Sarteano and the 1463 San Francesco supplication, linking funding for preaching with the choir renovation.<sup>75</sup> The emphasis placed on public preaching by the civic authorities meant that mendicant churches like San Francesco would have been filled to capacity. In this cultural context, the friars would have sought ways to increase the amount of space available to the laity.

Patronage of the high altar chapel could also have affected the restructuring of San Francesco. According to Guerrini, on 9 February 1464 the prestigious chapel was ceded to Antonio Martinengo di Padernello, captain of arms under the Venetian republic.<sup>76</sup> Guerrini intriguingly states that Martinengo was induced to enlarge the high altar chapel by the Franciscan preacher, Giacomo della Marca, and that it was ceded to the nobleman on after its completion. If Martinengo was buried in San Francesco, all traces of his tomb have disappeared.<sup>77</sup> Giacomo preached in Brescia between 1461 and 1462, seeking refuge after fleeing the offer of the Milan archbishopric.<sup>78</sup> His popularity was attested on 11 May 1462 when the Consiglio thanked Giacomo ‘who preached in this our city with a great assembly’.<sup>79</sup>

This sequence of events corresponds to the documentary evidence, which cites space

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<sup>73</sup>Zanelli (1901), p. 94: ‘elegantissime, mirabiliter et utiliter’. According to a document dated 16 April 1438, Luca ‘in ecclesia s. francisci die quolibet elegantissime predicaverat’. Volta et al. (1994), p. 318.

<sup>74</sup>Deliberation of the Consiglio of 20 December 1445: ‘habere audentiam grandem et multum proficere in populo’. Lonati (1937), p. 61.

<sup>75</sup>Dated 26 September 1444: ‘Aloysius Stella L. 1’. Lonati (1937), p. 60.

<sup>76</sup>Paolo Guerrini, *Una celebre famiglia lombarda. I conti di Martinengo* (Brescia: Geroldi, 1930), p. 267, quoted in Volta et al. (1994), p. 320: ‘il 9 febbraio 1464, essendo compiuta l’opera in forma decorosa, il Capitolo generale dei Frati Minori gli concesse quella cappella come sepolcro esclusivo di lui e dei suoi discendenti, con facoltà di erigervi e dorarvi un altare conveniente e di aprire uno o più sepolcri.’ Guerrini did not provide an accompanying archival reference, so his claim cannot be verified.

<sup>77</sup>Guerrini stated that in his will, Antonio Martinengo instructed his two sons to complete the construction of the Gesuati church of San Cristo. Guerrini (1930), pp. 266–69. However, Morassi stated that it was Giovanni di Preposto Martinengo who helped to finance the church. Morassi (1939), p. 126.

<sup>78</sup>Giacinto Nicolai, *Vita storica di San Giacomo della Marca* (Bologna: Pontificia Mareggiani, 1876), p. 107.

<sup>79</sup>Zanelli (1901), p. 114n: ‘Fratri Jacobo de la Marcha predicatori sollemnissimo ordinis fratrum minorum quomodo in hac civitate nostra predicavit cum maximo concursu’. Intriguingly, after his stay in Brescia, Doge Cristoforo Moro invited Giacomo to Venice, where he resided at the Observant Franciscan church of San Giobbe, raising questions about his possible influence on the building of the retrochoir. Antonio Rigon, ‘San Giacomo nell’Italia settentrionale’, in *San Giacomo della Marca nell’Europa del ’400. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi Montepreandone, 7–10 settembre 1994*, ed. by Silvano Bracci (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1997), pp. 181–83.

for preaching as an important motivation. After initial plans in 1451, the arrival of San Giacomo della Marca in Brescia could have encouraged the friars to revive efforts to create a better preaching space. The involvement of Martinengo would have provided much needed financial input, which together with the donation from the Brescian Consiglio Comunale, enabled the rebuilding of the high altar chapel. As we shall see, the involvement of a layman in the process of removing choirs is not an isolated case.

### 4.2.3 Further developments in the church

The removal of the choir must have caused a hiatus in the liturgical life of the church. Franciscan liturgical guidelines dating back to the 1240s assumed the presence of a bipartite choir in front of the high altar. Further changes to the church fabric in San Francesco show that the friars completely reformed the way in which they used liturgical space.

In 1466, closely following the choir removal, a ‘very beautiful’ new organ was commissioned ‘to the glory of omnipotent God’<sup>80</sup> although the carving and decoration was only completed in 1502.<sup>81</sup> The organ was placed near the new choir, above the door leading to the sacristy. The position of the old organ (if there was one) is not known but was presumably in the nave. The decision to erect a new instrument near the retrochoir indicates that the friars still prioritised the musical quality of their services.

When the choir was located in the nave, friars could enter the church via the south-aisle door leading to the late fourteenth-century cloister (Fig. 142).<sup>82</sup> However, with the choir positioned behind the high altar this entrance became redundant. Instead, a small cloister was built to the immediate south of the retrochoir, which provided a concealed route from the convent to the choir (Fig. 141). The cloister, called ‘della Madonnina’ after the small statue on the central fountain, has not been precisely dated, but it certainly reflects late fifteenth-century style.<sup>83</sup> Two external doorways lead to a street behind the convent (now known as the *Tresanda San Nicola*) and to a south door of the retrochoir. Despite the

<sup>80</sup>1466, 7 aprile: ‘unum pulcherrimum organum constui facere... ut organum ipsum fiat ad laudem omnipotentis dei’. Volta et al. (1994), p. 320.

<sup>81</sup>On 2 August 1502 ‘Il V.do Monistero s’obliga pagare Ducati 30 à Nicolò dell’Ora perchè faccia e compisca tutti gli intaglij e fornimenti dell’Organo.’ Volta et al. (1994), p. 325.

<sup>82</sup>The cloister was built in the late fourteenth century by Guglielmo da Frisone. Volta et al. (1994), p. 28.

<sup>83</sup>Baldissin Molli dates the cloister to 1485 and attributes it to Antonio da Zurlengo. Giovanna Baldissin Molli, ed., *Frate Francesco Sansone “De Brizia” Ministro Generale OFMConv (1414–1499)* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2000) (hereafter referred to as Baldissin Molli, 2000<sup>1</sup>), p. 116.

insertion of new stone (this area of the convent was badly damaged during the Second World War), the doorway appears to be coeval with the retrochoir masonry (Fig. 143). Although the choir door and cloister cannot be dated accurately, it is likely that the cloister was built just after the retrochoir, functioning as a new route. Friars could process from the convent via the small cloister and outside pathway to the choir, without entering the body of the church, newly occupied by the laity.

The new choir arrangement left the nave ‘empty and clear’, ceding space for the laity during services and more opportunities for private chapels. After the 1460s, a series of large chapels were erected along the north nave aisle, the grandest of which was the chapel of the Immaculate Conception situated fourth from the west (Fig. 144).<sup>84</sup> Inspired by the Franciscan Minister General Francesco Sansone, the chapel was begun in 1476 by the lay confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. The impressive polygonal structure was possibly designed by Filippo de Vachis, while below a crypt functions as a burial place for members of the confraternity.<sup>85</sup> The removal of the choir from the nave meant that this large chapel could be built without considering the impeding choir screen. Although the chapel would have been on the lay side of the screen, its destruction enabled a more impressive structure. In a vacant nave, the triumphal-arch entrance to the chapel could be appreciated at a distance and the potential for processions was increased, such as on the feast of San Bernardino, cited above.

#### 4.2.4 Conclusion

San Francesco in Brescia is one of the earliest examples of choir removal in northern Italy. Later architectural work in the basilica, such as the building of the Cloister della Madonnina, show that the whole organisation of liturgical space had to be reassessed. This case demonstrates that reforms to choir arrangements were often not governed by senior church authorities, but by individual churches responding to practical problems. Rather than resulting from liturgical change, new choir arrangements demanded the reorganisation of the use of sacred space.

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<sup>84</sup>The chapels in the right nave aisle consisting of simple altars attached to the wall were erected between 1497 and around 1525. Volta et al. (1994), p. 111.

<sup>85</sup>Volta noted similarities with the raised choir of Santa Giulia in Brescia by Filippo de Vachis or delle Vacche and Giovanni del Formaggio, also called Giovanni da Rumano. Volta et al. (1994), p. 45.

At Pentecost 1482, San Francesco hosted the triannual Franciscan General Chapter which was attended by representatives from across Europe.<sup>86</sup> At the Chapter, the wider Franciscan congregation could witness the recent architectural changes at San Francesco. It would be fascinating to know the reactions of visiting friars to the new choir arrangement and certainly the reduced number of stalls could have caused problems. In comparison with the 124 seats in the Frari in Venice, the twenty-two in San Francesco would have seemed insufficient. Perhaps temporary seating was installed for the Chapter, or fewer large services took place in the choir. In addition, the chapter house in San Francesco, located to the east of the fourteenth-century cloister, is particularly small (No. 10 in Fig. 142). In fact, it seems that originally there were more seats than the twenty-two which survive today. In the volume published by Volta et al in 1994, photographs of the chapel of the Immaculate Conception show that some choir desks were located in front of the mid sixteenth-century intarsia stalls.<sup>87</sup> The desks have identical intarsia decoration to those in the choir, indicating that they all originated from the old choir. These additional desks show that the choir must have had significantly more stalls than the extant number, but when and why they were removed remains a mystery.

Despite its public exposure at the Chapter, San Francesco did not inspire other choir renovations within the Conventual Franciscan order, possibly due to practical constraints. In 1468, the Frari in Venice built a new prominent choir precinct in the east bays of the nave, while San Francesco in Treviso also continued conservatism within the order. In 1484, the Treviso friars and the Raynaldi family—patrons of the choir area—agreed to demolish and rebuild the old choir and screen ('podiolus') in the nave.<sup>88</sup> However, they requested that the choir remain in the same location in a rectilinear format, evidenced by the four exterior angles where the insignia of the Raynaldi were to be placed.<sup>89</sup> Even though the

<sup>86</sup>The Chapter was held on 26 May 1482. Presumably the erroneous later date painted on the choir stalls—26 May 1483—was meant to refer to this Chapter. Lucas Waddingus, *Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco Institutorum*, ed. by P. Joseph Maria Fonseca ab Ebor, 3rd (Florence: Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), 1932), vol. 14, p. 380: '1482... Franciscus Samson Minister Generalis convocavit Patres ad Comitia Generalia in urbem Brixensem'.

<sup>87</sup>Image in Volta et al. (1994), p. 157. The desks are no longer in this location.

<sup>88</sup>The agreement is dated 31 May 1484 and is transcribed in Sartori (1983–1988), pp. 1616–17: 'convenierunt videlicet quod dictus podiolus demoliat'.

<sup>89</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1617: 'ipsi dni fratres et sic promiserunt ponere seu poni facere super portas ipsius chori ac etiam in 4uor angulis ipsius chori a partibus exterioribus arma et insignia predicta ipsorum de Raynaldis'. On 6 July 1484, the reconstruction was vetoed by the minister of the province of Sant'Antonio, Giacomo di Rovigo and the podiolus was only destroyed in 1612. Giovanni Netto and Giovanni Battista Tozzato, 'Due date sicure nelle origini del S. Francesco di Treviso', *Il Santo. Rivista*

Treviso friars must have known about the Brescian developments, their decision shows that Franciscan Conventuals adopted different choir arrangements in the late fifteenth century.

### 4.3 Dominican Order: Santa Corona in Vicenza

The Dominican church and convent of Santa Corona in Vicenza was founded in 1260, inspired by the donation of a spine from the crown of thorns by the bishop of Vicenza, the Blessed Bartolomeo da Breganze.<sup>90</sup> Lorenzoni and Valenzano have shown that the original location of the choir in the medieval church is revealed by architectural features in the nave. The fifth nave bay from the entrance is significantly larger, and its octagonal columns with foliate capitals contrast with the plain circular piers and cushion capitals in the rest of the nave (Figg. 145, 146).<sup>91</sup> This position corresponds to the location of nave portals: the cloister door is on the east side of the choir, while the two main entrances for laity (the south and west portals) are on the west side. In 1500, during the construction of Battista Graziani's chapel in the fifth bay of the north nave aisle, he paid for a pulpit to be removed, which was attached to the fourth nave pier.<sup>92</sup> As pulpits were often situated near choir precincts, this evidence also points to the location of the medieval choir in the fifth nave bay.

Although undocumented in archival sources, the monumental Trecento tramezzo probably traversed the larger fifth bay.<sup>93</sup> The tramezzo could be dated to 1321, when the altar of the Sacra Spina was newly consecrated, but was certainly in existence in 1336, when a donation was given for oil for the lamp 'which is before the large cross which is above the door of the choir'.<sup>94</sup>

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*antoniana di storia dottrina arte* XXXV, no. serie II, fasc. 3 (1995), p. 808n.

<sup>90</sup>Bartolomeo was given the relic by the French king Louis IX in 1259 on his return from an evangelical trip to England. Domenico Bortolan, *S. Corona. Chiesa e convento dei Domenicani in Vicenza. Memorie storiche* (Vicenza: Editrice S. Giuseppe, 1889), p. 34.

<sup>91</sup>Lorenzoni and Valenzano (2007), p. 315.

<sup>92</sup>Graziani offered 'aureos quinque' for the pulpit to be removed. Bortolan did not indicate the Latin word used for the pulpit which could have confirmed whether it was indeed the screen itself. Bortolan (1889), p. 287.

<sup>93</sup>Lorenzoni and Valenzano (2007), p. 315.

<sup>94</sup>Portolano Casalino established in his testament of 1336 that his heirs must give 'omni mense tres libras oley in Lampade que est ante crucem magna que est supra rezam chori Sancte Corone'. Lorenzoni and Valenzano (2007), p. 315. The word 'rezam' is related to 'regia', defined as 'cancelli in ecclesiis, qui vulgo separant chorum seu sanctuarium a navi'. Du Cange (1954), vol. 7, p. 93.

### 4.3.1 The *cappella maggiore* and the new choir

The first document relating to the rebuilding of the *cappella maggiore* is a will dated 19 March 1478 in which Nicolò fu Andrea ‘de Alemania superiori’ donated twenty-five ducats ‘for the fabric of the high altar chapel of Santa Corona’.<sup>95</sup> The following January, the friars requested fifty ducats from the College of Notaries to fulfil the building project in a fascinating document which also states the reasons for the renovation (see transcription and translation in Appendix B.6, p. 300).<sup>96</sup> Confirming that work had started the previous year using funds from the convent, College and other private individuals, the document notes that the church had been full of crowds of the faithful laity. The friars hoped that with the choir removed from the centre of the church, the nave would be ‘free and spacious’ for the use of the people, to the honour of God and the whole city. We next hear about the *cappella maggiore* in 1481, when Sibilla de’Calderari left two hundred ducats in her will for the chapel ‘if it was not complete’, showing that construction was in progress.<sup>97</sup>

Evidently, these donations were not sufficient for the completion of the project. On 21 April 1482 the friars of Santa Corona came to an agreement with Count Palmerio Sesso regarding the choir and *cappella maggiore* of the church (see transcription and translation in Appendix B.7, p. 301).<sup>98</sup> The Sesso family had enjoyed burial rites in the *cappella maggiore* for over a century, and the first Palmerio Sesso, Podestà of Vicenza, was buried there in 1349.<sup>99</sup> In 1482 the friars agreed that Sesso would finance the rebuilding and enlarging of the *cappella maggiore*, the vaulting of which had probably been damaged in an earthquake of 1347.<sup>100</sup> In the 1482 agreement, the destruction of the tramezzo was not mentioned since it had already occurred in 1478, but the intention to place the choir in the newly enlarged *cappella maggiore* was made explicit.

<sup>95</sup>Giovanni Mantese, *Memorie storiche della chiesa vicentina. Volume terzo, parte seconda (dal 1404 al 1563)* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1964), p. 964: ‘xxv ducatos fabrice capella altaris magni ecclesie S. Corone’.

<sup>96</sup>The document is dated 15 January 1479 and is transcribed in Bortolan (1889), pp. 230–31. Bortolan notes that confirmation that the funds were received is the presence of the Collegio’s arms on the south exterior wall of the choir. Bortolan (1889), p. 231.

<sup>97</sup>On 12 November 1481 Sibilla, daughter of Cittadino de’Calderari wrote in her will: ‘Item legavit capelle maiori nunc incepte et hedificate in dicta ecclesia S. Corone ducatos ducentos expendendos in ipsa capella si non fuerit completa, in ornatu et apparatu ipsius capelle’. Mantese (1964), p. 964.

<sup>98</sup>ASVi, CRS, Santa Corona, busta 132, no. 53. Short extracts are transcribed in Bortolan (1889), pp. 77, 243.

<sup>99</sup>Palmerio was Podestà 1341–42. His tomb is attached to the left wall of the *cappella maggiore*. Bortolan (1889), p. 78n.

<sup>100</sup>Bortolan cited an entry for 14 May 1347 in the *Cronaca ad memoriam temporis preteriti* which described the earthquake. Bortolan (1889), p. 76.

Similarly to San Francesco in Brescia in the 1460s, the need for creating more space for the laity was cited as a high priority in the 1482 Santa Corona document. The church was considered ‘narrow’ and incapable of holding large crowds, who flocked to come and venerate the prized relic from the crown of thorns. With the expansion of the *cappella maggiore*, the nave would be empty and free for use by the people. These improvements would not only be to the glory of God and the church, but would benefit the city as a whole. Sesso was also obliged to finance construction of stone steps leading from the church to the choir, a squared stone pavement in the chapel, four glass windows (two in the chapel and two in the choir) and the presbytery near the high altar, where the ministers sit during the mass. In addition, the Sesso family had to furnish the high altar with an altarpiece worth at least 150 ducats, and stalls in the choir costing at least six ducats each. All the work had to be completed within seven years, and in exchange the Sesso family were granted full rights to erect tombs and display their heraldry.

The 1482 document only stated the intentions of Sesso and the friars with regard to the high altar area, and in reality the results were rather different. In the completed building, windows were inserted in each wall of the seven-sided apse, rather than the four windows proposed in the document. An entry in the unpublished index to the convent’s archive notes that the friars were still waiting for the Sesso family to provide the high altarpiece in 1544.<sup>101</sup> In 1489, Palmerio Sesso made his will in which he specified that his tomb should be in front of the high altar, between the tombs of his wife and mother, with two further tombs of the Sesso family being placed on the side walls.<sup>102</sup> Given that he also provided funds for a red and white squared pavement and various liturgical vestments, the chapel itself was probably substantially complete.<sup>103</sup>

The situation became more complex in the 1490s with developments to the crypt chapel

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<sup>101</sup> ASVi, CRS, Santa Corona, busta 76, fol. 288: ‘Pala del Coro. 1544, 27 settembre. Tutti li Conti Sesso convengono di far fare la Pala del coro, conforme l’obligazione assonta l’anno 1482, 21 aprile.’

<sup>102</sup> ASVi, Testamenti anno 1489, 20 September (consulted by the author), partially transcribed in Mantese (1964), p. 965: ‘Pro sepultura corporis sui vult ipse d. testator fieri facere tria honorifica et pulchra monumenta ante altare maius sue capelle magne in ecclesia S. Corone. Quorum unum a latere dextro intitulatum sit magnifice d. Caterine q. matris d. testatoris. Aliud vero a parte sinistra magnifice matrone d. Magdalene nate q. magnifici et generosi d. Uberti dominorum de Corigio... Tertium vero in medio dictorum dominorum vult sepeliri corpus suum... Item voluit, iussit quod in dicta capella magna... fiant et construantur de bonis suis due arche marmoree pulchre... una pro quoque latere dicte capelle’.

<sup>103</sup> ASVi, Testamenti anno 1489, 20 September (consulted by the author), partially transcribed in Mantese (1964), p. 965: ‘unum salizatum de lapidibus vivis quadratis albis et rubeis ad ornamentum dicte capelle... unam planetam’.



under the *cappella maggiore*, patronised by the Valmarana family. In 1456 the chapel to the left of the high altar, dedicated to St Dominic, had been granted to Pietro di Battista Valmarana. However, because of the proposed work on the *cappella maggiore*, the friars ceded the crypt chapel to his descendants Luigi and Battista Valmarana in 1481. The friars also planned to transfer the holy relic of the spine to the new crypt chapel. In return for burial rights in the chapel, the Valmarana were obliged to construct the chapel under the high altar; to build wooden benches around the walls; and to enclose the area where the relic was to be placed with iron gates and a wooden door.<sup>104</sup>

According to Bortolan, work on the crypt chapel or *confessio* was initiated on 20 October 1481 and completed on 4 June 1482, by the architect Lorenzo da Bologna, well known to the Valmarana.<sup>105</sup> Possible problems with the architectural work however, led to a new contract being drawn up with the architect Gasparo da Malo in 1495. Gasparo had to destroy the existing vaults of the crypt and raise new ones by at least a foot, also raising the heights of the windows.<sup>106</sup> Four years later, however, the restructuring was still not complete, as a document records a protest made by the friars to the Valmarana, requesting that they finish work on the sanctuary by Pentecost 1499.<sup>107</sup>

The intention of the large-scale restructuring at Santa Corona is clear. The friars evidently wanted to clear the nave of obstructions so that more people could worship at the church, at the same time creating a focus of devotion at the east end. The relic from the crown of thorns would be displayed in a newly built chapel in the crypt, and the choir and high altar above provided a focus for liturgical ceremonies. In 1478 the choir was removed from the nave, and in 1481 building work commenced on the crypt chapel and *cappella maggiore* above.

According to the ‘Cronaca vicentina’ in the Biblioteca Bertoliana in Vicenza, the church

<sup>104</sup>The Valmarana were also obligated to construct stone stairs descending down to the chapel, arches in red marble with doors of larch, two balustrades at sides of steps, and the decoration of the altar. Bortolan (1889), pp. 80–81.

<sup>105</sup>Lorenzo da Bologna was paid 46 ducats for the work. Bortolan (1889), p. 81. On 19 January 1480, a contract was drawn up between Lorenzo da Bologna and Giacomo Valmarana for his house in the parish of Santa Corona. Giovanni Lorenzoni, *Lorenzo da Bologna* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1963), p. 20. Du Cange (1954), vol. 2, p. 495: ‘Confessio . . . ita dictus locus sub majori altari positus’.

<sup>106</sup>Contract with Gasparo da Malo, dated 6 April 1495 and transcribed in Bortolan (1889), p. 83: ‘Item sia obligado ut supra a sue spexe a ruinare el volto e arefarlo . . . et sia obligado dicto volto alzare un piede e più . . . et remeterle e remover quelle viriade e finestre e alzarle secondo e tanto e quanto sarà bisogno.’

<sup>107</sup>In a document dated 9 January 1499, the friars protest to Nicolò Cav. Valmarana, Giacomo and Girolamo his brothers, and other members of the Valmarana clan, requesting that they finish the sanctuary at their own expense by the following Pentecost. Bortolan (1889), p. 83.

was consecrated on 20 October 1504, perhaps signalling the end of restructuring work including the removal of the tramezzo and construction of the Graziani chapel.<sup>108</sup> The whole project was not completed until 10 April 1520, when the relic was translated to its purpose-built crypt chapel.<sup>109</sup> Concentrating devotion on the crypt chapel could have been influenced by the resurgence of interest in the cult of local martyr saints Leonzio and Carpofofo, whose relics were rediscovered in the confessio of Vicenza Cathedral in 1455.<sup>110</sup> The cathedral subsequently undertook a restructuring of the *cappella maggiore*, which began in 1482 also involving the architect Lorenzo da Bologna.<sup>111</sup>

### 4.3.2 The choir stalls

The choir stalls at Santa Corona have not been the subject of an independent study and few extant documents relate to their construction. In the 1482 agreement, Palmerio Sesso was required to fund ‘the choir and its necessary seats’.<sup>112</sup> Thirty-one upper and twenty substalls follow the curve of the apse behind the high altar in Santa Corona. The stalls have been attributed by Arslan and Manni to the workshop of Pierantonio degli Abati, whose intarsia work displays generic scenes in a refined style similar to the Santa Corona panels.<sup>113</sup> Pierantonio was commissioned to make intarsia panels for the choir of Monte Berico in Vicenza in 1484, locating him in the city during the 1480s, and a comparison shows striking similarities with the Santa Corona designs. One of the Monte Berico panels depicts a cupboard containing two bowls of fruit, the lower of which has a delicately defined vine leaf placed on some dates, the same motif occurring on stall eight in Santa

<sup>108</sup>An inscription above the south door in Santa Corona reads: *TEMPLUM HOC A B. BARTHOLOMAEO BREGANTIA EPISC. VINCENT. ORD. PRAED. SUB TITULO SANCTAE CORONAE ERECTUM AC UNA EIUSDEM CORONAE SPINA DONO S. LUDOVICI IX GALLIARUM REGIS DECORATUM ANNO DOMINI MCCLXXII IOANNES CLERICATUS EPISCOPUS CATHARENSIS DEDICAVIT ANNO DOMINI MCIV. XX OCTOBRIS.* Bortolan (1889), pp. 191–92.

<sup>109</sup>The service took place at 10pm and involved a solemn procession with candles and a large congregation of clerics and laity. Bortolan (1889), p. 85.

<sup>110</sup>From the *Cronica preteriti temporis* quoted in Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Caterina Furlan and Giuseppe Barbieri, *La Cattedrale di Vicenza*, ed. by Giuseppe Barbieri (Vicenza: Terra Ferma, 2002), p. 123: ‘Adì 10 agosto il giorno di S. Lorenzo a hore 23 fu trovato in Confessione della Chiesa cathedrale del Domo di Vicenza li Corpi di santi Leonzio e Carpophoro martiri’.

<sup>111</sup>From the *Cronaca che comenza dall’anno 1400* quoted in Fiaccadori, Furlan and Barbieri (2002), p. 121: ‘nel 1482 fo butà a terra et ruinà la capella grande del Domo di Vicenza per caxon de farla da novo più bella, perché era vecchia’. The cupola of the *cappella maggiore* was not completed until 1565. Giovanni Mantese, *La Cattedrale di Vicenza. Profilo storico*. Ed. by Riccardo Placchetta (Vicenza: Rumor, 1991), p. 119.

<sup>112</sup>ASVi, CRS, Santa Corona, busta 132, no. 53: ‘chorum et sedes ipsius necessarias’.

<sup>113</sup>Edoardo Arslan, *Catalogo delle cose d’arte e di antichità d’Italia. Vicenza. I. Le Chiese* (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1956), p. 70. Manni (2001), p. 275.

Corona (Fig. 147). The Santa Corona panels, which show more simplified forms and less convincing perspective than at Monte Berico, should therefore be attributed to the workshop of Pierantonio.

Nineteen of the intarsia panels show generic city scenes including churches, houses and castles, while objects such as chalices, books and boxes appear in cupboards in ten of the stalls. In a reference to the dedication of the church, stall fourteen depicts the crown of thorns hanging on a nail above a caged goldfinch, symbolic of the Passion. Two stalls depict the Sesso family heraldry: bendy of three plain colour and three check. Stall thirteen depicts the Sesso coat of arms and helm surrounded by scrolling ribbons together with a half-length portrait of a man facing left, carried in the talons of a crowned eagle. In a similar formation, stall nineteen shows a female figure facing right and festoons of oak leaves encircling the shield (Fig. 148). These stalls are the only ones to feature intarsia *a toppo* decoration on the seat-backs, consisting of a centralised leaf design.

The two figures above the two coats of arms are facing away from the centre of the choir precinct, suggesting that the stalls are not in their original position. Additionally, the central stall, which depicts jugs, bowls and books, does not display the iconographic importance generally granted to central stalls in semi-circular choir formations.<sup>114</sup> Over time, the number of stalls has been reduced. When Bortolan was writing in 1889 there were thirty-three stalls, which had dwindled to thirty-one by the time Arslan compiled his survey of Vicentine churches in 1956.<sup>115</sup> Intarsia panels from the two missing stalls were reused in the present nave altar, and depict two further Sesso shields which fill the whole panels (Fig. 149).<sup>116</sup> Bortolan confirmed that in the late nineteenth century there were four stalls depicting Sesso arms, two of which were situated at either end of the upper row.<sup>117</sup>

It seems that in the 1480s the choir was situated in front of the high altar, albeit removed from its medieval location in the nave. A note in the index to the convent's archive compiled in 1736 states that in 1663 the Sesso family were consulted 'in order to

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<sup>114</sup>For instance, the central stall in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan depicts St Ambrose, the patron saint of the city.

<sup>115</sup>Bortolan (1889), p. 243. Arslan (1956), p. 69.

<sup>116</sup>The altar panels measure 470 x 760mm, the same as the choir stall-backs. They were not noted by Arslan or Manni.

<sup>117</sup>Bortolan described the image of the Sesso castle as the penultimate stall on the right, showing that the missing stalls were placed in terminal positions. Bortolan (1889), pp. 243–44.

bring the high altar forward and to move back the seats of the choir'.<sup>118</sup> In the 1489 will of Palmerio Sesso, it is clear that the choir and the altar were considered separate spaces, as the red and white squared pavement had to lead 'from the choir up to the altar'.<sup>119</sup> Various documents referred to the grand marble stairs that lead up to the presbytery as the stairs at the entrance of the choir, again locating it in front of the high altar. In his will of 1573, Costantino Sesso ordered that a chapel be set up 'immediately at the top of the stairs that go to the choir'.<sup>120</sup> The seating could have been aligned with the straight walls of the rectangular presbytery, with the altar and celebrants' benches placed further east.<sup>121</sup> In this arrangement, the four intarsia panels depicting the Sesso arms could have been positioned at the four corners of the choir precinct.

At Santa Corona therefore, the choir has been moved twice. In the 1480s it was removed from its medieval position to the new presbytery but in front of the high altar. In 1663 the choir and altar exchanged places, and the present marble altar and tabernacle were constructed, providing a division between the two zones.

### 4.3.3 Further developments in the church

The removal of the choir from the centre of the church in the 1480s meant that the entire nave could be accessed by the laity during service, and that more space was available for private chapels. On 26 November 1500, Battista Graziani was ceded the right to build a chapel dedicated to John the Baptist in 'that vacant space next to the altar of the Virgin Mary towards the choir'.<sup>122</sup> The chapel of the Madonna delle Stelle was fourth from the west on the left side of the nave.<sup>123</sup> The Graziani chapel was built to its east—'versus chorum'—firmly placing the choir in the east end of the church. Before his agreement with Santa Corona, Graziani had been using his family chapel in Santa Maria dei Servi,

<sup>118</sup> ASVi, CRS, Santa Corona, busta 76, fol. 411: 'Per le sedie del Coro, et Altar maggiore. 1663, 29 novembre. Concenso prestato la Sigrì Conti Sessi, perche sia portato avanti l'altar maggiore e fatte di dietro le sedie del Coro. Atti di Giuglio Pizzolari.'

<sup>119</sup> ASVi, Testamenti, anno 1489 (20 september 1489): 'a choro dicte capelle usque ad altare'.

<sup>120</sup> Bortolan (1889), p. 251: 'subito in capo della scalla che va in coro'.

<sup>121</sup> The presbytery benches were constructed by the two woodworkers Salvo and Perfetto in 1544 for fifteen ducats. Bortolan (1889), p. 244.

<sup>122</sup> ASVi, Santa Corona, busta 110, fol. 3: 'Locum ipsum vacantem prope aram divae Mariae Virginis versus chorum'.

<sup>123</sup> The chapel of the Madonna delle Stelle was erected by Gherardaccio di Alberto da Medesano in 1301, but was ceded to the confraternity of the Madonna della Misericordia in 1519. Bortolan (1889), p. 270.

in which his two children were buried.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps the liberation of space in the nave of Santa Corona prompted Graziani to build a large, new chapel in the Dominican church. His spiritual motivation was his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he made a vow to erect an altar dedicated to John the Baptist, as recorded on two inscriptions on the fourth and fifth nave piers (Fig. 151).<sup>125</sup>

The altar is famously decorated with a huge altarpiece of the *Baptism of Christ* by Giovanni Bellini, set in an elaborate marble frame attributed to the workshop of Bernardino da Como, Tommaso da Milano and Rocco da Vicenza (Fig. 150).<sup>126</sup> The design of the painting itself responds to the position of the chapel in the church. The foreground figures are lit from the right seemingly by the large windows in the newly constructed apse, and the immense size of the painting means that its ideal viewpoint is the centre of the nave.<sup>127</sup> Such an enterprise would have been impossible had the friars' choir remained in its original position in the fifth bay of the nave. In fact, the chapel occupies the whole width of the nave aisle up to the fourth and fifth nave piers which bear the inscriptions.<sup>128</sup> Raised on three steps, the chapel was originally enclosed by a balustrade and two spolia statues (which are no longer in situ) were placed at the entrance beneath the inscriptions.<sup>129</sup> Graziani fully utilised the space of the side aisle, which would have been used for circulation had the friars' choir not been removed.

On the opposite side of the church (although further east than the Graziani chapel), a chapel was constructed at the end of the south transept in 1482. Patronised by Cristoforo

<sup>124</sup>On 1 March 1502, the bishop gave Graziani permission to exhume the bodies of his two children from their tomb in Santa Maria dei Servi and to rebury them in Santa Corona: 'Reverendissimi in christo patris et domini petri dandulo episcopi Vincentiae Vicarius generalis, concessit licentiam nobili viro baptistae de gratianis civi vincentino ut possit exhumari facere ossa filiorum suorum sepulta in ecclesia Servorum Vincentiae et illa portari facere et dotari ad ecclesiam Sanctae Coronae Vincentiae et illa reponi in sepulchro per eum condito in dicta ecclesia.' Simona Ciofetta, 'Il 'Battesimo di Cristo' di Giovanni Bellini: patronato e devozione privata', *Venezia Cinquecento* 1, no. 2 (1991), p. 82. The Garzadori altar in the Servite church is the first on the right, and was founded by Battista's uncle, Camillo Garzadori, and rebuilt in 1594. Arslan (1956), pp. 157–58. There is an inconsistency in the spelling of the family name, Garzadori or Graziani.

<sup>125</sup>The inscription reads BAP. GRATIANVS/ EX HIEROSOLIMIS SOSPES/ HOC SACELLUM/ DIVO IOANNI/ DICAUIT/ ANNO MD.

<sup>126</sup>For the Bellini altarpiece, see Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 163–67, Ciofetta (1991), Maria Cristina Dossi, 'L'altare Graziani Garzadori in Santa Corona a Vicenza e un restauro di Antonio Lombardo', *Paragone, terza serie* 48, no. 15–16 (571–573) (1997), and Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour. Marble, mosaic, painting and glass 1250–1550* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 171.

<sup>127</sup>Hills noted that the foreground is lit from the right but the background from the left, with the dull middle ground masking the transition. Hills (1999), p. 171.

<sup>128</sup>Ciofetta (1991), p. 80.

<sup>129</sup>Graziani obtained two statues while on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, one of which was restored by Antonio Lombardo and is currently in the Museo Civico di Vicenza. Dossi (1997), pp. 24, 29–37.

Barbarano, the altar was dedicated to the Virgin, Vincenzo martyr and Jerome and was built by the architect of the new choir, Lorenzo da Bologna.<sup>130</sup> The chapel was probably finished by 4 May 1491, when Cristoforo pledged an annuity of six ducats for the friars to say daily mass.<sup>131</sup> The liberation of the whole church for the laity could have been influential in Barbarano's decision to build such a large chapel.

As in San Francesco in Brescia, the friars at Santa Corona had to reconsider their practical use of liturgical space following changes to choir placement, and how their space in the church corresponded to conventual areas. When the choir was in the upper nave, it was easily accessible via a door from the cloister to the north transept. With the choir in the *cappella maggiore*, the friars could still use the cloister entrance and process up the imposing marble stairs above the opening to the crypt. However, a further grand staircase was built connecting the *cappella maggiore* to a series of small rooms on the north side of the church including a new sacristy (Fig. 152). Funds for the new sacristy were pledged by Gasparo Trissino in his will of 1483, showing that it was part of the same pattern of restructuring as the new choir.<sup>132</sup> Today the upper part of the stairs is blocked in and the lower part is used as a storage facility. The monumental scale of this staircase and its pink marble facing suggests that it was used for processions of friars and not just for those assisting at the high altar. Thus friars would have been able to access their choir directly from the north-eastern conventual buildings without being seen by the laity in the nave.

#### 4.3.4 Conclusion

Santa Corona in Vicenza is one of the earliest examples of choir renovation, a case enriched by the survival of original documents and the stalls themselves. The two extensive documents at Santa Corona—the 1479 supplication to the Collegio dei Notai and the 1482 agreement with Sesso—give similar reasons for the changes in choir placement as in San Francesco in Brescia. The church was considered too small for the crowds of people who attended the services, so the choir was to be moved to an extended *cappella maggiore*.

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<sup>130</sup>Terracotta friezes on the exterior of the chapel are similar to Lorenzo's contemporary work at the Vicentine cathedral. Lorenzoni (1963), p. 29.

<sup>131</sup>Bortolan (1889), p. 217.

<sup>132</sup>Bortolan (1889), p. 289: 'ordenò e lasso sia dato . . . cinquanta a lanno per la fabrica dela segrestia se de fare'. Bortolan did not provide a precise date or archival reference for the document, and did not mention the monumental staircase to the new choir.

As a result the nave would be devoid of obstructions and available for use by the laity. Both communities stated that choir renovations would be for the good and honour of the whole city and appealed to civic authorities and wealthy lay individuals for funds. Even the wording of the documents was analogous: in Vicenza the phrase ‘totum ipsi ecclesia corpus vacuum’ recalls the wording of the 1451 Brescian document: ‘[i]ta quod ecclesia remaneat tota vacua’.

Rather than a causal link between the two cases, both houses were simply affected by the same problems and reacted with similar interventions. However, whereas in San Francesco the choir was placed in the polygonal apse, in Santa Corona it was removed from the nave but placed in the presbytery still before the high altar. Evidently the Dominicans wanted the practical benefits of removing the choir from the nave without significant disruption to their liturgical practices.

The Dominican order did not show a preference for choirs before or behind the high altar. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, churches in northern Italy developed choir precincts with completely different orientations. Stalls in the Dominican church of San Domenico in Ferrara were donated by Thomasina di Guramonti da Ferrara in 1384 and survived the rebuilding of the church in the early eighteenth century.<sup>133</sup> As the stalls were not designed to fit their present location in a semi-circular apse, we can assume that in the medieval church they were situated in the nave. A fifteenth-century Ferrarese anonymous diarist described the removal of the choir to the *cappella maggiore* of the medieval church in 1496.<sup>134</sup> On Christmas day in 1496, the friars ‘started to stay behind the high altar in the *cappella maggiore* of San Domenico, to sing their offices and Mass’. The diarist did not elucidate the motivations for such a fundamental change to the interior space of the Dominican church, but his description shows that such changes were of interest to laymen, who would now have more space in the newly liberated nave.

In Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan (officiated by the reformed congregation of

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<sup>133</sup>The church was originally built in the thirteenth century, but was rebuilt in 1710–26 by Vincenzo Santini, conserving the thirteenth-century campanile and fifteenth-century sacristy. *Emilia e Romagna* (1957), p. 621.

<sup>134</sup>Pardi (1933), p. 193: ‘Insino a dì XXV dicto, zorno de Natale, de dominica, li frati de Santo Dominico de Ferrara principiono de state de dreto a lo altare grande de la capella grande de Sancto Dominico, a cantare li suoi officii et Messe, in le sedie che erano consuete de essere in lo coro de dicta giesia et megio de dicto altare, de soto a li scalini che se va al dicto altare, le qualle sedie furno portate del dicto coro de dreto altare, et le qualle sedie gia’ havea facto fare et ponere in dicto coro una madonna Thomasina di Guramonti da Ferrara, da cento anni in suso.’

Sant'Apollinare in Pavia) Bramante's tribune was started in 1492 and probably finished in 1497 (Fig. 153).<sup>135</sup> Soon after, in 1510, the choir stalls were placed in the curved *cappella maggiore*. Fragments of the 1470s woodwork were incorporated into new stalls, with intarsia panels possibly designed by the painter Bernardino Butinone, whose frescoes of Dominican saints adorn pilasters between the nave chapels.<sup>136</sup> The new choir stalls were evidently designed to be flush against the curved walls of the apse, and their iconographic program focusses on the central image of Sant'Ambrogio, the patron saint of Milan.<sup>137</sup>

The situation in San Domenico and Santa Maria delle Grazie contrasts with Sant'Anastasia in Verona, where a new choir was built in front of the high altar in the 1490s.<sup>138</sup> It must have been an imposing structure, since around 1501 Prior Angelo Faella employed three stonemasons to face the walls of the choir, and mount statues of saints Dominic and Peter Martyr above the doors.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, at San Domenico in Bologna, new stalls were placed in front of the high altar as late as 1551, when Fra Damiano Zambelli completed the intarsia choir.<sup>140</sup>

## 4.4 The Cassinese Order

Churches belonging to the reformed Benedictine Cassinese order, known as *De Unitate* until the monastery of Montecassino joined in 1504, have been variously cited to equate the development of retrochoirs with monastic reform.<sup>141</sup> The Cassinese are the only order which had a consistent viewpoint regarding the placement of choir and altar, preserved in legislation. In the fifteenth century, choirs were placed in front of the altar, despite requests from lay patrons to change this arrangement. Later in the sixteenth century, this position was reversed in the famous cases of Santa Giustina in Padua and San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

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<sup>135</sup>Fiorio (1985), pp. 67, 71.

<sup>136</sup>The intarsia cartoons have been attributed to Butinone or Zenale. Fiorio (1985), pp. 69, 74, 76.

<sup>137</sup>Ciati argues that both the upper and substalls show indications of having been converted from a rectilinear to curved arrangement, suggesting that the stalls were not designed for their current location. Ciati (1983), p. 215.

<sup>138</sup>Franco showed that the fifteenth-century pavement could indicate that the choir was between the fourth and fifth columns from the west. Franco (2007), p. 118.

<sup>139</sup>Rognini (1994), p. 23. The tramezzo itself crossed the entire width of the nave and contained four altars. Franco (2007), pp. 119, 122.

<sup>140</sup>Alce (1969), p. 51.

<sup>141</sup>For example, Christa Gardner von Teuffel, 'Perugino's Cassinese Ascension for San Pietro at Perugia. The Artistic and Musical Setting of a High Altarpiece in its Cassa', *Stadel Jahrbuch* 18 (2001).



Choir placement in the mother church of the reformed order, Santa Giustina in Padua, was highly complex. On 1 May 1457, the Paduan doctor of law, Giacomo Zocchi, made his will in which he donated funds of up to 800 ducats for the fabric of Santa Giustina. In his will, he proposed radical changes to the liturgical layout of the church:

I wish and arrange that the chapel where the high altar is should be enlarged and lengthened so that the cupola or tribuna can fall into place under which the high altar is situated, and afterwards one or two crossed vaults out of higher walls according what fits better, so that a large choir may be made for the monks to sing divine office.<sup>142</sup>

The difficulty in interpreting this passage is the translation of the word ‘postea’, generally translated as ‘afterwards’ in terms of time.<sup>143</sup> The word could be implicit statement about space, or be a misspelling of ‘*post*’ meaning after or behind.<sup>144</sup> It is evident later in the document that the choir and high altar are conceived as being in the same chapel.<sup>145</sup> Most art historians have understood that Zocchi wanted the choir to be placed behind the high altar, without acknowledging the ambiguity of the text.<sup>146</sup> Tonzig questioned the meaning of the word ‘*cadat*’ and concluded that it referred to something that is perfectly adapted or placed.<sup>147</sup> Rather than meaning that the tribuna will fall down, it means that it will fall into place, similar to the phrase ‘*tot sedes quot cadere poterint*’ in the Zadar Cathedral choir stalls contract of 1418.<sup>148</sup> The altar was not going to be placed directly against the east wall of the chapel, since Zocchi wished his tomb to be on the ground in the choir, behind the altar.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, fol. 52v: ‘volo et dispono quod capella ubi est altare magnum ampliatur et allongetur in tantum quod cadat copula sive triuna sub qua ponatur altare magnum et postea una vel due cruserie in volta de mura superiorius secundum quod melius conveniat in tantum quod fiat unus magnus chorus per monachis cantantibus divina’. This section of the document has been published in Sartori (1983–1988), vol. III.2, p. 1605 and Maria Tonzig, ‘La basilica romanico-gotica di Santa Giustina in Padova’, *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova, New Series V XXII*, no. VII (1929), p. 300, document VII.

<sup>143</sup>Lewis and Short give the main translations as ‘after this or that, hereafter, thereafter, afterwards’. Lewis and Short (1998), p. 1404.

<sup>144</sup>I am very grateful to Daniel Hadas for his useful analysis of this word.

<sup>145</sup>ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, fol. 52v: ‘Et si fiat capella ubi nunc est altare magnum cum choro’.

<sup>146</sup>Christa Gardner von Teuffel states ‘At both Padua and Milan they [the Cassinese monks] rejected proposals to move the *coro* behind the altar into a newly enlarged presbytery in order to accommodate a benefactor’s tomb.’ Gardner von Teuffel (2001), p. 132.

<sup>147</sup>Tonzig (1929), p. 224.

<sup>148</sup>See above, p. 82.

<sup>149</sup>ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, fol. 52v: ‘Et si fiat capella ubi nunc

However, this document shows that Zocchi did not insistently demand the rebuilding of the choir, instead suggesting other uses for his donation if the abbot was not in favour. In his will (which has not been transcribed in full) he stated that if the money was not used to enlarge the choir, then a chapel on the left side of the nave should be erected and the rest of the funds used for its ornamentation.<sup>150</sup> If the abbot decided that neither chapel was to be built, then Zocchi's tomb should be placed wherever he thought best. Finally, if none of these options were chosen, then Zocchi wanted his fortune to be transferred to the newly built Carthusian church of San Lorenzo in Padua.<sup>151</sup> In the rest of his extensive twelve-page testament, Zocchi pledged funds to various hospitals and churches, including San Giorgio in Padua, the monastery of San Giovanni in Verdana in Padua, San Francesco in Ferrara and the Santo in Padua.<sup>152</sup> Viewed in the context of the whole document, the proposed choir renovations do not seem to be of great concern to the doctor of Law.

Whatever the intentions of the patron, the abbot of Santa Giustina decided not to go through with dramatic alterations to choir placement. However, the choir and apse were rebuilt together with elaborate intarsia choir stalls which remain in their original position. At Zocchi's death in 1461, building work probably commenced, but was still in progress in 1474.<sup>153</sup> The choir is divided into two bays of simple rectangular rib vaults, while the vault of the pentagonal apse consists of eight ribs meeting in a boss above the altar (Fig. 155). An oculus appears in the central wall of the apse, two lancets are placed high on the two adjacent walls, while lower lancets appear in the final two sides. This disposition of lights is evidently designed to complement a large high altarpiece, as the high placement of the central windows would prevent silhouetting.

The apse was raised on three steps while the altar itself placed was on another step.<sup>154</sup>

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est altare magnum cum choro volo quod in illa post altare in plano stratorio et pavimento fiat sepultura mea de lapide expensis mee hereditatis prout videbitur commissariis meis.'

<sup>150</sup>ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, fol. 52r: 'Et ex nunc illud legatum revoco et nollo valere, salvo nisi abbas et conventus deliberarent pro meliori consilio non remove dictam capellam nec eam ampliare, quia tunc et eo casu volo quod fiat una capella in ingressu ecclesie sancte Justine ad manum sinistram in angulo supra illam domini raphaelis Cumani.' This section of Zocchi's will has not been published.

<sup>151</sup>ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, fol. 52v: 'Et si neutrum eligerent, tunc dictum legatum tramissero e fieri volo in ecclesia certusiensi noviter fabricanda in sancto leonardo de padua.'

<sup>152</sup>Zocchi was called 'de feraria' in his will which would explain the choice of San Francesco in Ferrara. ASP, Archivio Notarile, Notaio Da Urbino G. Battista, busta 234, ff. 52r, 55r, 55v.

<sup>153</sup>Zocchi died on 11 November 1461, but a 1474 document refers to the 'propter fabricam et reparationem cori jam inceptam'. Tonzig (1929), p. 225.

<sup>154</sup>The flooring has evidently changed since 1929, as Tonzig reports that the apse was raised on four steps

The choir was raised above the nave by a central staircase of five steps, while to either side steps led down to the crypt which housed relics of Giustina, Urio and the Holy Innocents. The choir was separated from the nave by a screen, topped by a statue of Giustina and a crucifix, as illustrated in a sixteenth-century manuscript illustration (Fig. 156).<sup>155</sup> Zocchi's floor tomb is currently inserted into the north wall of the apse, having been removed from its original position in the centre of the apse probably around 1513.<sup>156</sup>

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the monks discussed the possibility of building a new church incorporating part of the existing one. In 1498, the Cassinese order gave the Santa Giustina monks permission to start building a new church, having seen the site of the old church and the new design.<sup>157</sup> Paduan chroniclers state that the first designs were by the monk-architect Girolamo da Brescia, which Zovatto assumed took the form of a Greek cross attached to the fifteenth-century choir, acting as its eastern arm.<sup>158</sup> In 1513, Girolamo Romanino was commissioned to paint organ shutters and a large high altarpiece for the fifteenth-century altar, showing that the monks still intended to utilise this space in the new project.<sup>159</sup> In 1516, a new architect, Andrea Briosco (known as *il Riccio*), was appointed, but the form of his new design is not known.<sup>160</sup> In the years 1518 to 1520, the monks reordered the terrain to the north of the monastery, showing that they had decided to build the church *ex novo*.<sup>161</sup>

In a similar situation to the old church of Santa Giustina, the Cassinese monks of San Pietro in Gessate in Milan resisted the influence of a layman to move the choir to the *cappella maggiore*. In 1500, Francesco Visconti, a former ducal counsellor, donated 2000 ducats to the monastery in his will for the extension of the *cappella maggiore*.<sup>162</sup> He

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and the altar on a further three. Tonzig (1929), p. 231.

<sup>155</sup>Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. 107. Benedetto Bordon, *Evangelario*, 1523. Illustration from Lorenzoni and Valenzano (2000), p. 261, fig. 252.

<sup>156</sup>Tonzig made this assumption based on the date of the installation of Romanino's high altarpiece. Tonzig (1929), p. 230. For the tomb see (1980), p. 315, cat. 183.

<sup>157</sup>Deliberation of 21 June 1498. Paolo Lino Zovatto et al., *La basilica di Santa Giustina. Arte e storia* (Castelfranco Veneto: Edizioni del Grifone, 1970), p. 127: 'havemo deligentemente veduto e esaminato prima il sito et spacio de la chiesa vechia e di poi consjderato il modulo facto per la nova chiesa... quindi concludemo che cusi se facia la dicta chiesa'.

<sup>158</sup>Zovatto et al. (1970), p. 128.

<sup>159</sup>Romanino was commissioned on 20 April 1513. The altarpiece shows the *Virgin and Child enthroned with saints Benedict, Giustina, Prodocimo and Scolastica*. Zovatto et al. (1970), p. 130.

<sup>160</sup>The contract is dated 12 November 1516. Zovatto et al. (1970), p. 131.

<sup>161</sup>Zovatto et al. (1970), p. 133.

<sup>162</sup>Testament of 29 October 1500, in Archivio di Stato Milano, Trivulzio, OM Mo 40/1, n. 3. transcribed in Adriano Frattini, 'Documenti per la committenza nella chiesa di S. Pietro in Gessate', *Arte lombarda, nuova serie* 65, no. 2 (1983), doc. 17, p. 45.

wanted his heirs to lengthen the *cappella maggiore* up to the street behind the monastery, and to place within it ‘the choir which is now in the body of said church’.<sup>163</sup> Visconti died the same year, but his instructions were not put into action. In 1509, the monks obtained papal permission to use his donation for work on the cloister instead of the choir resystemisation, and the apse of the church was finally extended in 1571.<sup>164</sup> As in Padua, a layman left money for the reordering of the choir within the *cappella maggiore*, but the monks went against his wishes after his death. Both cases show that removals of choirs were often lay initiatives, but that the Cassinese monks were not willing to change their liturgical space.

On 21 January 1520, at a Chapter held in Santa Giustina and presided over by the head of the order, Theophilus of Milan, the monks agreed certain principles of church buildings. The most important rule regarding choir placement was ‘that the high altar is placed in the head of the *cappella maggiore* according to the custom of our congregation’.<sup>165</sup> Effectively this means that the choir should be placed in front of the high altar, in the easternmost part of the church. Perhaps this legislation was a reaction to the increasing number of churches changing their choir placement, or the proposals made by laymen at Cassinese monasteries in Padua and Milan.

The plan of the new church of Santa Giustina was substantially complete in 1521, under the architect Matteo da Valle, although construction lasted for most of the century under the architects Andrea Moroni and Andrea da Valle.<sup>166</sup> The church comprises a three-aisled nave flanked by side chapels, elongated transepts which now contain the shrines of St Luke and St Matthew, and an extended eastern arm. The new church had a retrochoir-type design, but in fact the stalls were placed in the presbytery in front of the altar, conforming to the 1520 legislation. The elaborately carved stalls comprising fifty scenes from the life

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<sup>163</sup>Fratini (1983), doc. 17, p. 45: ‘summam ducatorum duorum mille, et quo tunc teneantur ipsi heredes ampliare sive reducere capellam mayorem usque ad stratam que est post ipsum monasterium et postea asumere chorum quod nunc est in corpore dicte ecclesie, et ipsum statuere in capella mayori que nunc extat in dicta ecclesia’.

<sup>164</sup>Fratini (1983), pp. 36–37.

<sup>165</sup>ASP, Corporazione Soppressa, Santa Giustina, busta 491, 22r: ‘Item quod altare maius statuatur in capite capellae maioris prout et consuetudo congregationis nostre’. See also Gardner von Teuffel (2001), p. 124.

<sup>166</sup>Matteo da Valle was *proto* from 1521 to 1532, then Andrea Moroni took over up to 1560. Andrea da Valle was *proto* from 1560 to 1579, and Vincenzo Scamozzi worked on the vaults of the church from 1605 to 1615. The high altar area was in use from 1555 and the church was consecrated on 14 March 1606. Zovatto et al. (1970), pp. 134–48. Pepi (1966), p. 203.

of Christ were commissioned to ‘maestro rizado francese intagiador’ (Riccardo Taurino) on 22 September 1558 (Fig. 91).<sup>167</sup> The choir was only moved to its present position around the apse in 1623, followed by the construction of new steps and balustrade in 1630 and a new high altar in front of the choir in 1640.<sup>168</sup> The corridor which was constructed between the old choir and new apse in 1538 had to be diverted towards the west because the stalls were positioned flush with the apse walls, blocking the original doorway.<sup>169</sup>

Later in the sixteenth century in a radical change of ideology, Cassinese churches were rebuilt with extensive retrochoirs. Isermeyer notes that up to about the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, Cassinese churches had choirs in front of high altar, seen for example at San Sisto in Piacenza.<sup>170</sup> Then in the 1540s the church of Montecassino was transformed according to a design made in 1531 by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, with the stalls placed around a semi-circular apse.<sup>171</sup> Later sixteenth-century Cassinese churches such as San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice<sup>172</sup> and the Badia in Arezzo had extensive retrochoirs, rejecting the 1520 decree.<sup>173</sup>

The Cassinese order were unique in legislating on choir placement (or rather, altar placement) in their 1520 directives. In the late fifteenth century, the order were adamant on traditional choir placement, while in the later sixteenth century, retrochoirs became the preferred option. Unfortunately no documents can reveal the motivations behind such a radical change in policy. However, it does show that choir placement was a contentious issue in this period. In the fifteenth century, communities wanted the choir closer to the altar, but not actually behind the altar. This sense of compromise is also evident in later Cassinese retrochoirs, in which the stalls were not arranged in a semi-circular formation, but were still divided into two ranges, as seen in Santa Giustina and San Giorgio Maggiore. This arrangement meant that precise liturgical guidelines referring to the choir could still be followed.

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<sup>167</sup>ASP, Corporazione Religiose Soppresse, Santa Giustina, busta 490, fol. 197r.

<sup>168</sup>Pepi (1966), pp. 133–34.

<sup>169</sup>Pepi (1966), p. 112.

<sup>170</sup>Isermeyer (1968), p. 45.

<sup>171</sup>Tracy E. Cooper, ‘Locus meditandi e orandi: Architecture, liturgy and identity at San Giorgio Maggiore’, in *Musica, scienza e idee nella Serenissima durante il Seicento*, ed. by Francesco Passadore and Franco Rossi (Venice: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 1996), p. 85.

<sup>172</sup>Tracey Cooper has discussed whether Palladio had planned for a retrochoir in San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice as early as 1565. Cooper (1990), p. 102.

<sup>173</sup>For Vasari’s reworking of the Badia in Arezzo see Ackerman (1980), p. 302.

Cassinese church designs have been used to show the influence of reform on choir placement, but in fact the conservatism of the fifteenth-century decisions suggests otherwise. Winkelmes saw the Cassinese church designs as intimately related to doctrinal reform but did not fully analyse the importance of the ordering of choir and altar.<sup>174</sup> Ackerman did not focus on earlier Cassinese choir arrangements, but stressed the reform aspect of the order, its ability to steer architectural projects through the annual general meeting, and the acoustic benefits of the new choir position.<sup>175</sup> Conservatism in choir placement was also observed by other monastic orders such as the Carthusians, whose choirs have never been moved from their original location before the high altar.<sup>176</sup>

## 4.5 Cathedrals

As described in liturgical guidelines for cathedrals, choirs were normally situated in front of the high altar, but often placed in the presbytery rather than the nave. However, cathedrals' decisions to move choirs behind the altar provide insights into the motivations for this general phenomenon. Early examples in northern Italy include the cathedrals of Padua, Ferrara and Reggio Emilia.

### 4.5.1 Padua Cathedral

Although not completed until the late sixteenth century, a new retrochoir was proposed at Padua Cathedral in 1486 (Fig. 157). The medieval cathedral (which no longer survives) was built after a devastating earthquake in 1117, and representations of the building are preserved in a manuscript illustration and a fresco by Giusto de'Menabuoi in the adjacent Baptistry.<sup>177</sup> In this cathedral, the canons' choir comprised two rows in the raised presbytery in front of the high altar.<sup>178</sup> A crucifix and screen or 'podiolus' was situated in front of the choir containing a chapel dedicated to the Santissima Croce.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Winkelmes (1996), pp. 61–84.

<sup>175</sup>Ackerman (1980), pp. 298–230.

<sup>176</sup>See for example the Certosa di Bologna and the Certosa di Pavia.

<sup>177</sup>The manuscript illustration is in Padua, Biblioteca del Capitolo, cod. B52. Claudio Bellinati, *Michelangelo e il 'Nuovo Coro' della Cattedrale di Padova (1551–1582)* (Padua: Provincia di Padova, 2005), p. 7. The Baptistry frescoes were dated to 1375–78 by Bettini (1960), p. 34.

<sup>178</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. xx.

<sup>179</sup>Bresciani Alvarez noted that there was an altar of the Holy Cross 'sub podiolo... in medio ecclesiae ante chorum [vicino al] Crucifixum Magnum', but did not provide an archival reference for this quotation or include a screen in her reconstruction of the medieval cathedral. Giulio Bresciani Alvarez, 'La Basilica di

In 1438 Pope Eugenio IV granted an indulgence for contributors ‘to the repair and building of the major church [cathedral] in Padua’.<sup>180</sup> The Paduan bishop Pietro Donato (1431–47) left 24,000 *lire* in his will of 14 September 1445 for the restoration of the cathedral, which was only used over forty years later.<sup>181</sup> On 19 December 1486, the cathedral canons appealed to the Consiglio del Comune di Padova for permission to use this legacy in the building of a new retrochoir, requiring the destruction of the public street directly behind the old apse.<sup>182</sup> The new choir would be constructed ‘above the chapel of St Daniel and extend above the public street behind said chapel’. On 26 December 1487, the Consiglio voted by eighty-five to four in favour of levelling the public street to facilitate construction of the cathedral choir.<sup>183</sup> By this point, the canons had employed an architect to plan the new choir, as they presented a model or design to the council.<sup>184</sup> According to Bellinati the foundation stones of the fifteenth-century retrochoir were laid, but work halted for sixty years until 1547.<sup>185</sup> Michelangelo provided a wooden model of the new choir, but the actual construction continued under various architects including Andrea Da Valle until its consecration in 1582 (Fig. 159).<sup>186</sup>

Intriguingly, the 1486 deliberation noted that the choir should be like ‘the way and structure of the church of St Peter in Rome’.<sup>187</sup> This must refer to the plans of Pope Nicholas V for an extensive retrochoir at St Peter’s, later developed under Paul II but

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S. Giustina’, in *Padova. Basiliche e chiese. Parte prima: le chiese dal IV al XVIII secolo*, ed. by Claudio Bellinati and Lionello Puppi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1975), p. 84.

<sup>180</sup>Bellinati (2005), p. 7: ‘ad reparationem et fabricam ecclesie maioris paduane’.

<sup>181</sup>He died on 7 October 1447. Antonio Menniti Ippolito, ‘Donà (Donati, Donato), Pietro’, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 40 (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1991), pp. 790–92.

<sup>182</sup>ASP, Archivio civico antico, Consiglio del Comune, Atti, busta 10 (1486–1491), fol. 53r: ‘Ipsi R.D. Canonici pro honore suo et laudabili et condigno principio fabricae et restaurationis ipsius ecclesiae habent intentionem fabricandi unum amplum et hornatissimum chorum tanquam caput ecclesiae modo et struttura Romanae Ecclesiae S. Petri fabricando chorum super capellam S. Danielis dictae ecclesiae et extendendo illum super viam publicam retro dicta capellam positam.’ This document has been consulted by the present author, but a partial transcription appears in Bresciani Alvarez (1975), p. 87. Bresciani Alvarez dates it to 1487, but the date in the archive document is 1486.

<sup>183</sup>The canons could ‘occupare et claudere in totum dictam viam publicam tantum quantum capient dicte fabrice et Restaurationes et dictus chorus’. ASP, Archivio civico antico, Consiglio del Comune, Atti, busta 10 (1486–1491), fol. 67r.

<sup>184</sup>ASP, Archivio civico antico, Consiglio del Comune, Atti, busta 10 (1486–1491), fol. 67r: ‘ac secundum modellum sine designum factum presentatum visum et examinatum’.

<sup>185</sup>Apparently the fifteenth-century attempts could be seen in recent excavations. In 1547, Paduan clerics were asked to donate to the new choir, and canonical houses were levelled to make space for the new construction. Bellinati (2005), pp. 8, 10. On 23 November 1547, the monks of Santa Giustina in Padua discussed giving money ‘per la fabrica della chiesa et choro del Domo’. ASP, Corporazione Soppresse, Santa Giustina, busta 490, fol. 160r.

<sup>186</sup>Bellinati (2005), pp. 11–18.

<sup>187</sup>ASP, Archivio civico antico, Consiglio del Comune, Atti, busta 10 (1486–1491), fol. 53r: ‘modo et struttura Romanae Ecclesiae S. Petri’.

never finished.<sup>188</sup> Bellinati stated that the Roman project designed by Bernardo Rossellino and Leon Battista Alberti would have been well known to the Paduan bishop in 1486, Pietro Barozzi.<sup>189</sup>

A new choir or ‘tribuna’ for the Vatican basilica was planned as part of the general refurbishments undertaken by Nicholas V (1447–55). The location of the choir in Old St Peters in the fourteenth century has been the subject of debate, being variously placed in the semi-circular apse or in an enclosed area against the south colonnade of the nave.<sup>190</sup> The first documented payments for work on the ‘tribuna di San Piero’ date from 1452, but work appears to have stopped in 1454.<sup>191</sup> After the death of Nicholas V in 1455, construction halted until the reign of Paul II, when considerable sums of money were paid for work on the new choir.<sup>192</sup>

In 1470, Paul II produced a medal depicting the projected scheme of the tribune in which the baldachino over the altar and shrine of St Peter can be clearly identified. Above in the deep semi-circular apse, Christ appears in a mandorla attended by two angels (Fig. 158).<sup>193</sup> An inscription reading ‘TRIBVNA S. PETRI’ appears in the arch, while around the medal are the words ‘HAS AEDES CONDIDIT ANNO CHRISTI MCCCCLXX’, showing that work was in progress. However, although substantial foundations had been laid work stopped at the death of Paul II in July 1471, and was not taken up by his successor, Sixtus IV.<sup>194</sup> According to the chronicler Matthia Palmieri, the walls had reached a height of thirteen *braccia* in 1452.<sup>195</sup> Following the abandonment of the tribune building, a separate choir chapel was built by Sixtus IV in 1479 on the south side of the basilica.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>188</sup>William Tronzo, ed., *St. Peter's in the Vatican* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 64–71.

<sup>189</sup>Bellinati (2005), pp. 7–8. Bresciani Alvarez noted the similarities between Rossellino's plan and the Paduan apse. Bresciani Alvarez (1975), p. 87.

<sup>190</sup>Gardner suggested that in the fourteenth century the choir was in the apse: ‘the chapter seated in the apse.’ Julian Gardner, ‘The Stefaneschi Altarpiece: A Reconsideration’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974), p. 63. On the contrary, Kempers and de Blaauw maintain that the choir was at the south side of the nave. Bram Kempers and Sible de Blaauw, ‘Jacopo Stefaneschi, Patron and Liturgist’, *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 47 (1987), pp. 96, 100.

<sup>191</sup>Torgil Magnuson, *Studies in Roman Quattrocento Architecture*, Figura no. 9 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958), p. 167.

<sup>192</sup>Magnuson (1958), p. 168.

<sup>193</sup>Magnuson (1958), p. 169. Hannes Roser, *St. Peter in Rom im 15. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Hirmer, 2005), p. 112.

<sup>194</sup>Magnuson (1958), p. 168. Tronzo (2005), pp. 71–72.

<sup>195</sup>Matthia Palmieri, quoted in Magnuson (1958), p. 168: ‘Pontifex ornatiorem Beato Petro Basilicam condere volens, altissima jacet fundamenta, murumque ulnarum tredecim erigit, sed magnum opus, ac cuius veterum aequandum primo Leonis Baptistae consilio intermittit; mors deinde immatura dirupit.’

<sup>196</sup>Kempers and Blaauw (1987), p. 96.



These foundations were recorded on a plan of the new basilica of St Peters, dating to the early 1500s and variously attributed to Francesco da Sangallo and Bramante.<sup>197</sup> Although not an accurate scale drawing, the plan shows that the new tribune should have been around eighty *braccia* long, terminating in a semi-circular apse. Different reconstructions for Nicholas V's plan have been suggested, but all show the tribune and transepts of equal length, with a domed crossing above the altar. The contemporary writer Gianozzi Manetti described the plan for seats arranged on either side of the tribune walls to accommodate as many people as possible. The papal throne would be raised at the far end of the space, so that the pontiff could be seen by the whole congregation.<sup>198</sup>

Despite not being called a 'choir' in documentation, it is clear from Manetti's description that the 'tribuna' was actually intended to house stalls for the Chapter. Hannes Roser, however, interprets Manetti's text as an idealised view of the building, which cannot be trusted for its description of functional aspects.<sup>199</sup> He also doubts Manetti's careful description of the seating arrangements in the new tribune, observing that the papal throne would be too far from the altar.<sup>200</sup> However, Christoph Frommel showed that later plans by Julius II to transform the unfinished western 'Chorarm' into a funerary choir chapel reveal the original intention of Nicholas V's extension.<sup>201</sup>

A retrochoir project in the Vatican basilica was certain to influence other church buildings. At Padua Cathedral, the canons expressly desired to build a structure similar to St Peters. It is of little importance that the tribune at the Vatican was never completed, as the high foundations and written description would have indicated the general design. Moreover, as a portable object, Paul II's medal depicting the tribune would have disseminated the architectural plans across Italy. Although the St Peter's tribune was not completed, the medal design and Padua Cathedral retrochoir share certain visual similarities. For example, both display a prominent cornice on the entrance piers which

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<sup>197</sup>The drawing is A20 in the Uffizi. Magnuson attributes the drawing to Francesco da Sangallo, while Tronzo and Roser name the author as Donato Bramante. Magnuson (1958), p. 171. Tronzo (2005), p. 66.

<sup>198</sup>Manetti, quoted in Magnuson (1958), p. 193: 'Utraque hujus tribunae latera, ob majorem personarum capacitatem, sedilium gratia hinc inde extendebantur, ac utrimque pluribus fenestris magnorum oculorum formas redactis egregie admodum ornabantur... In summitate vero tribunae solium pontificale altiuscule eminebat, ut et ipse ab omnibus circumstantibus videretur, ac pariter omnes astantes sedentesque videret.'

<sup>199</sup>Roser (2005), p. 75.

<sup>200</sup>Roser (2005), pp. 79–82.

<sup>201</sup>Christoph Luitpold Frommel, "'Capella Iulia': Die Grabkapelle Papst Julius' II in Neu-St. Peter', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1977), pp. 32–33.

continues under the barrel vault of the choir.

The St Peter's project could have also inspired other churches to change their choir arrangements. As late as 1599, reference to the Roman situation was made explicit in a Modenese chronicle which described liturgical changes at the Benedictine Cassinese church of San Pietro in Modena.<sup>202</sup> Due to the intervention of Duke Cesare d'Este, the altar was moved forward and the choir was pushed back '*alla romana*'.<sup>203</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Ferrara Cathedral

In 1498, an anonymous Ferrarese diarist reported an intention 'to knock down the *cappella grande* of the bishop of Ferrara and the seats, and to bring down the choir which was in front of the high altar'.<sup>204</sup> In the 1440s and 1450s various notable woodworkers had been employed at the cathedral, in projects to build new sacristy cupboards and benches for celebrants at the high altar.<sup>205</sup> It could have been during this period that the old choir was built, parts of which were still being used during the building of the new choir.<sup>206</sup> The first contract for the new choir was drawn up with Bernardino Canozi in 1501, but various woodworkers were employed on the extended project, with the cathedra in the centre of the apse only being completed in 1534.<sup>207</sup>

As one of the first choirs to be built in a new semi-circular position, the design will be discussed in further detail below (Fig. 161). The rebuilding of the *cappella maggiore* by the architect Biagio Rossetti to accommodate the choir was financed by Duke Ercole I of Ferrara, who could have also financed the wooden stalls (Fig. 160).<sup>208</sup> The Ferrarese

<sup>202</sup>San Pietro joined the Cassinese Congregation on 20 November 1434. Orianna Baracchi Giovanardi, ed., *San Pietro di Modena. Mille anni di storia e di arte* (Milan: Silvana, 1984), p. 24.

<sup>203</sup>Entry for 27 November 1599 in Giovan Battista Spaccini, *Cronaca di Modena. Anni 1588-1602*, ed. by Albano Biondi, Rolando Bussi and Carlo Giovannini (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1993), p. 291: 'Avendo il signor duca desiderio che li monaci di San Pietro facess[er]o l'altare maggiore della sua chiesa alla romana, cioè dinanzi, voltando il coro al contrario di quello ch'è, si sono lasciati intendere'. Also cited in Baracchi Giovanardi (1984), pp. 46. 176.

<sup>204</sup>Pardi (1933), p. 210: 'fu dato principio a desfare la capella grande del vescovato de' Ferrara et sedie, et a sbassare il coro che era inanti lo altare grande'.

<sup>205</sup>These included Alberto and Tommasino da Baiso, who were commissioned to make a sacristy cupboard in 1450. Luigi Napoleone Cittadella, *Notizie relative a Ferrara* (Ferrara: Domenico Taddei, 1864), p. 63.

<sup>206</sup>A contemporary chronicle records that the apse was 'pavimentato il nuovo nel 1507, vi fossero posti i sedili vecchi'. Cittadella (1864), p. 59. Bagatin (1991), p. 71.

<sup>207</sup>The contract with Bernardino does not survive but was reported by Scalabrini, in an unpublished manuscript in the Biblioteca Ariostea, *Memoria della Cattedrale di Ferrara*, ms. Cl. I 447. Frisoni (1982), pp. 539, 555. Bagatin noted that woodworkers involved in the project included Pietro Rizzardi, Sebastiano Rigone and Daniele Canozi, Bernardino's son. Bagatin (1991), pp. 69-73.

<sup>208</sup>Adolfo Venturi, 'L'arte dell'intaglio e della tarsia a Ferrara nella fine del Quattrocento', *L'Arte* 19 (1916), p. 56.

contemporary diarist reported that the Duke spent four thousand gold ducats on the project, and his coat of arms appears on the stall to the right of the cathedra.<sup>209</sup> Documents do not reveal the precise motivations for the rebuilding of the Ferrara Cathedral choir, but it might have been associated with the large number of clergy at the cathedral, or as a provision for visiting clergy.<sup>210</sup> The new choir contained 150 seats, a staggering number that outstripped most contemporary cathedral seating accommodation.<sup>211</sup> The canons might have considered the apse more commodious to house so many stalls than before the high altar.

### 4.5.3 Reggio Emilia Cathedral

The Gothic choir stalls now located in the apse of Reggio Emilia Cathedral are dated to the mid-fifteenth century (Figg. 162, 163).<sup>212</sup> Inconsistencies in the construction of the furniture and the addition of later woodwork shows that the stalls are not in their original position. It is likely that when they were constructed, the stalls were situated in front of the high altar in two rows, with twenty-three stalls either side.<sup>213</sup>

Renovations to the church fabric began in 1502, not long after the installation of the furniture. The canons wrote to the Comunità di Reggio Emilia on 14 January 1502 explaining that due to an increase in the number of clergy the choir in its present position was insufficient for the celebration of divine office.<sup>214</sup> They claimed that in moving the choir to an extended *cappella maggiore* at an affordable expense, the choir could be larger, rendering the church more honourable and spacious.<sup>215</sup> In addition, the new situation

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<sup>209</sup>Pardi (1933), p. 210: ‘et tutto per aggrandire epsa capella. et fu il duca Hercole che lo fece gettare zoxo, volendoli epso spendere del suo quattro millia ducati d’oro.’

<sup>210</sup>The Ferrara chapter was reasonably large, consisting of an archpriest, provost, archdeacon, *primicerius*, custos, treasurer, dean, fourteen canons, two prebendaries, eight mansionarii (resident canons), and fifty beneficed chaplains in a separate college. Denys Hay, *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 21–22.

<sup>211</sup>The choir was reduced to 132 seats in 1715 when the high altar was moved further back. Frisoni (1982), p. 547.

<sup>212</sup>Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, ‘Lavori d’intaglio e tarsia nei secoli XV e XVI a Reggio Emilia’, *Archivio Storico dell’Arte* 5 (1892), p. 321.

<sup>213</sup>Elio Monducci and Vittorio Nironi, eds, *Il Duomo di Reggio Emilia* (Reggio Emilia: Bizzocchi Editore, 1984), p. 25.

<sup>214</sup>Archivio Notarile di Reggio, Atto Arloti Gianmarco, 14 January 1502, filza n. 180, quoted in Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 82: ‘Et considerantes quod a nonnullis annis circa adeo multiplicat clerus prefate ecclesie causa multitudinis clericorum et etiam laicorum convenientium ad divina, maxime diebus solemnibus, chorus ipsius ecclesie redditur incapax et ex eo multum incommode celebrantur et audiuntur officia’.

<sup>215</sup>Archivio Notarile di Reggio, Atto Arloti Gianmarco, 14 January 1502, filza n. 180, quoted in Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 82: ‘attendentes hoc non tantum esse expendiens scilicet vero apud omnes laudabile ac honorificum ac magnum dicte ecclesie ornamentum futurum esse.’

would allow more lay access to the church, especially on important feast days.<sup>216</sup> The proposal was accepted the following November in a document which made clear that the choir would be placed in an extended *cappella maggiore* which would increase ‘the beauty and ornament of said church’.<sup>217</sup>

In 1505 the repositioning of the choir and the construction of new seating was entrusted to Nicola Sampoli who placed the stalls ‘in the part behind the altar’.<sup>218</sup> Despite various disputes with Sampoli and the employment of other woodworkers, by 1506 the canons ‘started to celebrate and do ceremonies in the new choir’.<sup>219</sup> The example of Reggio Emilia Cathedral shows that renovations could derive from both practical and liturgical considerations, together with aesthetic motivations. As in Ferrara Cathedral, the canons thought that they could accommodate more clergy in a retrochoir. Perhaps this was particularly relevant to cathedrals, possibly because the stalls’ previous location in the presbytery was insufficient. This contrasts with mendicant churches such as San Francesco in Brescia, which significantly reduced the number of stalls when they were moved to the apse.

## 4.6 Reasons for the removal of choirs

In the second half of the fifteenth century and first decades of the sixteenth, churches belonging to various religious orders across northern Italy changed the placement of their choir. As the continuation of a phenomenon developed in the central Italian areas of Umbria and Sansepolcro, it gained momentum in northern areas in the second half of the Quattrocento. There were various motives for changing the interior layout of a church, including practical reasons, aesthetic choice, lay involvement and the influence of nearby churches.<sup>220</sup> Since this shift began well before the Council of Trent, motivations were

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<sup>216</sup> Archivio Notarile di Reggio, Atto Arloti Gianmarco, 14 January 1502, filza n. 180, quoted in Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 82: ‘et etiam laicorum convenientium ad divina, maxime diebus solemnibus’.

<sup>217</sup> Quoted in Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 82: ‘canonici ecclesie maioris volunt et intendunt dilatare et ingrandire locum capelle in qua est altare magnum ipsius ecclesie postponendo et tenendo ibi choro deputato ad divina offitia celebranda quod equidem future esset maximo decore et ornamento dicte ecclesie et civitatis.’

<sup>218</sup> Archivio Notarile di Reggio, Atto Parisetti Francesco, 6 February 1505, filza n. 33, quoted in Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 82: ‘relevare et in capella noviter fabricata et a parte ulteriore altaris portare’.

<sup>219</sup> The nineteenth-century antiquarian Panciroli noted that in 1506 ‘si cominciò a celebrare e fare le cerimonie nel coro nuovo’. Monducci and Nironi (1984), p. 80.

<sup>220</sup> The difficulty of identifying the reasons for the new placement was noted by De Blaauw: ‘Meno ovvi sono i motivi della collocazione [dei cori] dietro l’altare maggiore.’ De Blaauw (2006), p. 41.

generally unrelated to liturgical reform.

Practical motivations affected the removals of choirs in the early examples of San Francesco in Brescia and Santa Corona in Vicenza. With the choir removed from the nave, more lay people could visit the church on important liturgical occasions. At Reggio Cathedral in 1502 the choir position was altered to accommodate an increased number of clergy, leaving more room for the laity. Similar reasons could have induced changes at Ferrara Cathedral, considering their large chapter. Goldthwaite characterised the late middle ages as a time of intense lay devotion which manifested in confraternities, cults of saints, indulgences, and commemorative and votive masses.<sup>221</sup> Removing the choir from the nave or presbytery meant that more space was made available for the faithful, and was a relatively cheap way of giving the impression of a larger church. In addition, since the extra space meant more chapels could be ceded to the laity, churches gained an increase in revenue.

Laymen were also closely involved in projects to remove choirs from their original positions. Gaier noted a tendency in this period for lay patrons to create funerary chapels around the high altar in front of the choir.<sup>222</sup> Laymen were involved in a number of projects in northern Italy: Doge Cristoforo Moro in San Giobbe in Venice; Antonio Martinengo di Padernello in San Francesco in Brescia; Palmerio Sesso in Santa Corona in Vicenza; and Duke Ercole I of Ferrara in Ferrara Cathedral. In some of these churches, the newly liberated nave was soon filled with lay chapels. Laymen proposed renovations in Santa Giustina in Padua and San Pietro in Gessate in Milan which were subsequently rejected by the monastic communities. Although not specifically referring to these early choir removals, Goldthwaite characterised a general lay appropriation of liturgical space in this period, with side chapels, the high altar chapel and choir being patronised by lay families.<sup>223</sup>

Involvement of a prominent lay ruler also fuelled changes to choir placement in the Augustinian church of San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna. The church underwent a Renaissance transformation at the end of the fifteenth century, financed by the *condottiere* and de facto ruler of Bologna, Giovanni II Bentivoglio (Fig. 164).<sup>224</sup> The Palazzo

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<sup>221</sup>Goldthwaite (1993), p. 107.

<sup>222</sup>Gaier (2006).

<sup>223</sup>Goldthwaite (1993), pp. 121–22.

<sup>224</sup>Giovanni I Bentivoglio (d. 1402) had possessed a title to rule in Bologna, but his successors, including Giovanni II, ruled in fact but not in law. Cecilia M. Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna. A Study in Despotism*

Bentivoglio was opposite the church, and family members were buried in the choir or in their large private chapel, constructed to the north-eastern side of the apse in 1445.<sup>225</sup> The first part of the architectural restructuring was the removal of the imposing tramezzo or '*corridorio*' which separated the choir from the rest of the church. No known original archival documents survive related to this removal, but contemporary and antiquarian sources provide some details. The seventeenth-century antiquarian Ghirardacci recorded that in 1483 'seeming to the lord Giovanni Bentivoglio that the *corridore* that crossed the church of San Giacomo, with the altars of St Catherine and St Peter underneath, indecently occupied said church, he removed it and reduced the church to one body, just as one sees it today'.<sup>226</sup> Other writers stressed the importance of changes to the altar, which must have been brought forward when the choir was moved. The contemporary diarist Gaspare Codibò noted that in 1483 'the Eremitani friars changed their altar and reshaped the church' and on 7 September of the same year the high altar was consecrated.<sup>227</sup> The specific reasons for this dramatic alteration cannot be determined from secondary sources, but the removal of the choir as part of a general restoration undertaken by a layman is a pattern noted in other contexts. In contrast to other examples, however, Bentivoglio did not intend to create a mausoleum in the *cappella maggiore*, since the family already had a private burial chapel. Indeed the location of Bentivoglio's remains are unknown since he died in exile.<sup>228</sup>

Aesthetic choice was cited as a reason for choir renovations in San Francesco in Brescia, where the new choir would be 'pro ornamento et amplitudine ecclesie'. Visual appeal was also considered paramount in the Dominican church of San Giovanni in Canale in Piacenza, where the tramezzo was removed because it was 'formless and an obstruction to

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(London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 89.

<sup>225</sup>In 1435 Antonio Gaelazzo Bentivoglio was buried in S. Giacomo 'in una bellissima sepoltura di marmo dietro il coro'. Quotation from Ghirardacci in Germana Piconi Aprato, 'L'architettura della chiesa di S. Giacomo', in *Il tempio di San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna*, ed. by Carlo Volpe (Bologna: Resto di Carlino, 1967), p. 233. The date 25 February 1445 appears on the entrance pilaster of the Bentivoglio chapel. The Palazzo Bentivoglio was in Strà San Donato, but was destroyed after Giovanni II was driven out of Bologna by Pope Julius II in 1506. Ady (1937), p. 134.

<sup>226</sup>Entry for 24 July 1483: 'Parendo al signor Giovanni Bentivogli che il corridore che traversava la chiesa di San Giacomo, ove erano sotto l'altare di santa Caterina e l'altare di san Pietro troppo sconciamente occupasse il detto tempio, il fece rimuovere et ridusse la chiesa ad un sol corpo, siccome hora si vede'. Ghirardacci (vol. III, p. 227, r. 42-45) quoted in Piconi Aprato (1967), p. 237.

<sup>227</sup>Entry for 7 september 1483: 'Die 7 septembris Heremitani fecerunt altare suum maius consecrari'. Entry for 1483: 'Fratres Heremitani hoc anno mutaverunt altare suum et reformaverunt ecclesiam'. Gaspare Codibò, *Diario bolognese dal 1471 al 1504*, quoted in Piconi Aprato (1967), p. 237.

<sup>228</sup>Giovanni II Bentivoglio died on 16 February 1508 in Milan. Ady (1937), p. 201.

the church'.<sup>229</sup> This emphasis on aesthetics also featured in contemporary architectural writings which proposed new church designs. In practical church renovations, the close physical relationship between choir, high altar and patrons' tombs created a liturgical focus. Similarly, in his *Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare*, Francesco di Giorgio Martini placed emphasis on the east end of the church: 'And basilicas having the proportions and shape of the human body, as a man's head is the most important part of the latter, so the chancel (*cappella maggiore*) must be the most important part, and head, of the church'.<sup>230</sup>

Even as late as the 1560s, when Tridentine directives were being implemented, choirs were still moved for aesthetic reasons, shown by an example from central Italy. A letter from the Operai di Santa Croce in Florence to Duke Cosimo de Medici dated 21 July 1566 states that 'when said choir is completely taken away, the church will appear very beautiful and magnificent, and the whole body of the church will be without comparison much more beautiful and delightful to the eye'.<sup>231</sup>

Imitation and rivalry could have been the motivating factors behind some choir renovations. On several occasions, two churches in the same city made changes to their choir placement within a few years of each other, implying a sense of civic rivalry. In Brescia in 1451, the Franciscan church of San Francesco wanted a new *cappella maggiore* like the newly constructed version in the nearby canons' church of San Giovanni. In Ferrara in the late 1490s, the new retrochoir at the cathedral was begun only two years after a similar project at San Domenico. In 1502, a choir renovation at Reggio Emilia Cathedral was followed two years later by a parallel development in 1504 in the canons' church of San Prospero, located only a few hundred yards from the cathedral (Fig. 165). The present basilica was built between 1514 and 1527, but sources show that in the old church the

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<sup>229</sup>Valenzano (2007), p. 99: 'informe e di impedimento alla chiesa'.

<sup>230</sup>English translation from Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), p. 56: 'Ed avendo le basiliche misura e forma del corpo umano, siccome el capo dell'omo è principal membro d'esso, così la maggiore cappella formar si debba come principale membro e capo del tempio'. The series of writings known as the *Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare* is in the Biblioteca Reale in Turin, Codex Saluzzianus 148. The text was not published in Francesco's lifetime, but was well known by contemporary architects.

<sup>231</sup>Letter from the Operai di S. Croce to Duke Cosimo de Medici, 21 July 1566, quoted in Marcia B. Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation. Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce 1565–1577* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 169, Document 3: 'quando detto coro si levasse del tutto, apparirebbe bellissimo et magnifico tempio, et tutto il corpo della chiesa saria senza comparatione molto più bello et dilettevole all'occhio'.

choir was located in front of the high altar.<sup>232</sup> A notarial document of 1504 describes how the choir was transported ‘from the body of the aforesaid church to the *cappella maggiore*’.<sup>233</sup> Dating to around 1457, the stalls were in their original position for only half a century before being disturbed.<sup>234</sup> Fragments of the old intarsia choir were saved during the rebuilding of the church, and incorporated into the new choir commissioned to Cristoforo de Venetiis in 1544.<sup>235</sup> Although no textual sources relate the motivations for the 1504 renovation, the architectural work at the adjacent cathedral must have had a significant influence.

In these pairs of examples, the close timings of the choir renovations and proximate locations of the churches suggest that there was an element of imitation involved. In Padua Cathedral, imitation of the new tribune of St Peter’s was made explicit. Clergy, monks and friars were aware of the latest developments in nearby churches, and might have desired to imitate both the aesthetic appeal and practical advantages of the new choir arrangement. In contemporary stall contracts, churches often instructed woodworkers to imitate choirs of different religious orders in different cities, showing that patrons were aware of diverse seating arrangements.

Improvements to liturgical practice was the main reason for the new choir placement in Sant’Ambrogio in Milan in 1507 (Fig. 166). The history of the choir is highly complex, due to the unusual situation of both Benedictine monks and secular canons officiating in the church.<sup>236</sup> It is likely however, that in the medieval period the monks and canons both used the wooden choir stalls for their separate liturgical services, although the canons did have some additional seating nearer the high altar.<sup>237</sup> The stalls themselves, which replaced the twelfth-century furniture, were originally situated in front of the high altar in the central vessel of the nave.<sup>238</sup> The present stalls were commissioned in 1469 in a highly

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<sup>232</sup>Monducci (1961), p. 245.

<sup>233</sup>Archivio Capitolare della Basilica di San Prospero, rogito Nicola Trignoli, quoted in Monducci (1961), p. 245: ‘de corpore ecclesiae predictae in capellam maiorem’.

<sup>234</sup>Donations for the building of new choir stalls were made in 1457. Monducci (1961), p. 246.

<sup>235</sup>The contract is dated 7 July 1544 and contains a clause sanctioning the reuse of elements from the old choir: ‘Item li sia lecito metere in opera tuti li brazali, cornisamenti, et pedi de ditti stalli vechi che saranno boni a iudicio de homini periti’. Monducci (1961), p. 258.

<sup>236</sup>In 1200, in a dispute between the monks and canons, the abbot claimed ‘quod canonici non habent in choro S. Ambrosii sedilia, nec lectorile . . . Item quod canonici non consequerunt sedere in stadiis monachorum’. Biscaro (1905), p. 53n.

<sup>237</sup>Biscaro (1905), p. 85.

<sup>238</sup>According to Forcella, the earlier stalls dated to 1141. Forcella (1896), p. 13.



detailed contract, but were removed from their original position together with their marble frontage in 1507, only thirty-six years after their completion (Fig. 167).<sup>239</sup>

An agreement was reached between the monks and the canons that the choir should be moved behind the high altar, where the divine office would be celebrated.<sup>240</sup> In documents published by Puricelli in 1656, a major reason for the new arrangement was the need for quiet and privacy in the choir, since ‘with a soul more quiet and more intent on God they [monks and canons] could do those things which relate to the singing of the Divine Office’.<sup>241</sup> The new position meant that the choir was ‘separated from the people’<sup>242</sup> and rules were laid down to ensure the private nature of the space: ‘the enclosed place of the choir should be maintained: as much as possible no one should be admitted to it, except men distinguished in some way’.<sup>243</sup> The document confirms that before the proposed changes, the area behind the high altar was used by the canons as a sacristy, and that the reorganisation involved moving the sacristy to another place.<sup>244</sup> In Sant’Ambrogio, the new choir arrangement facilitated a more reverential recitation of divine office and ensured that the space was kept private. In his sixteenth-century treatise however, Carlo Borromeo saw new choir arrangements as damaging to the spiritual life. As the clerics were in a more secluded area, they were more tempted to talk or make gestures than when they were in full view of the congregation.<sup>245</sup>

Andrew Hopkins cited liturgical reasons for the general shift to retrochoirs in the later sixteenth century. Following the work by Elaine De Benedictis on Roman monumental choirs or ‘schola cantorum’ of the high middle ages, Hopkins notes a bull proclaimed by

<sup>239</sup>The contract stated that the stalls had to be completed in 1471. Biscaro (1905), p. 93.

<sup>240</sup>Giovanni Pietro Puricelli, *De SS. Martyribus Nazario et Celso, ac Protasio et Gervasio, Mediolani sub Nerone cæsis, deque basilicis in quibus eorum corpora quiescunt: Historica dissertatio, Rerum etiam Urbanarum notitiæ perutilis: quam brevitatis gratia Nazarinam nuncupari placeat.* (Milan 1656), p. 630: ‘ut in ipsum locum chorus transferatur, ad divinorum celebrationem’.

<sup>241</sup>Puricelli (1656), p. 630: ‘quietiore animo & ad Deum intentiore, quæ ad decantanda divina officia pertinent, agere possint’.

<sup>242</sup>Puricelli (1656), p. 630: ‘ab populi interventu separati’.

<sup>243</sup>Puricelli (1656), p. 630: ‘clausum teneat chori locum: neque in eo, quantum fieri poterit, ullum, nisi aliquo modo insignem virum, admittat’.

<sup>244</sup>Puricelli (1656), p. 630: ‘locum qui est post altare maius ecclesie prædictæ Sancti Ambrosii, in quo nunc domini Canonici Sacristiæ usum habent... in alio loco commodo sacristiam honestam tutamque dominis Canonici’.

<sup>245</sup>Borromeo (1952), p. 110: ‘Un altro inconveniente è anche questo che i sacerdoti, sedendo dietro l’altare, guardano verso Occidente non già verso Levante cosa che è contraria agli antichi precetti della disciplina ecclesiastica. Per di più dal popolo non è più visto il clero, il quale, in quel luogo piuttosto oscuro e nascosto si diporta con gesti, e con parole alquanto più liberamente che non farebbe in vista dell’assemblea, che la si temerebbe come un testimonio e un riprensore della propria licenza, e così l’amore della virtù e il timore del biasimo sarebbero di stimolo alla compostezza.’

Pope Gregory XIII in 1575 which suppressed the obligatory choral chanting of divine office by the Roman clergy.<sup>246</sup> De Benedictis related the creation of monumental choirs with the promotion of choral chanting under Paschal II, and their destruction with the removal of the liturgical obligation in the late sixteenth century. However, considering the fifteenth-century examples of retrochoirs presented in this chapter, a change in 1575 could not have been the impetus for such developments. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that communities whose choirs were situated behind the high altar had an inferior musical tradition. On the contrary, in San Francesco in Brescia the composer Valerio Bona wrote a setting for Mass and Vespers for four choirs in 1611, exemplifying the continuing importance of music.<sup>247</sup>

Although the documents presented in this chapter do not refer to the acoustic benefits of retrochoirs, a musical argument for their existence has been proposed. The most convincing example of such a relationship between music and architecture is in San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, built by Jacopo Sansovino from 1534.<sup>248</sup> One of the friars of the convent, Fra Francesco Zorzi, was involved in the administration of the new building and wrote a treatise on harmony and proportion. With regards to the acoustic design of the church, he wrote: 'I recommend to have all the chapels and the choir vaulted, because the word or song of the minister echoes better from the vault than it would from rafters.'<sup>249</sup> Improved acoustics does not seem to be a major concern for religious communities such as San Francesco in Brescia which moved their choir from the nave to a semi-circular apse. However, later in the period, when retrochoirs were built with longitudinal barrel vaults, the potential for improved acoustics could certainly have been a consideration.

Documents show that churches moved choirs behind the high altar for a variety of reasons. Motivations included reordering the church interior to allow more space for the laity; aesthetic concerns; imitation of neighbouring churches; and improvement of

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<sup>246</sup>The bull 'Ex sedis apostolicae' is dated 28 February 1575. Elaine De Benedictis, *The 'Schola Cantorum' in Rome during the High Middle Ages (facsimile of PhD thesis submitted to Bryn Mawr College 1983)* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1985), p. 149. Hopkins (1998), p. 39: 'In fact, there was a broad shift to retrochoirs in the second half of the sixteenth century made possible by Pope Gregory XIII's abolition, in 1575, of the mandatory choral recitation of the Divine Office, combined with the Tridentine desire for increased visibility of the high altar.' Hopkins (2000), p. 253n.

<sup>247</sup>Volta et al. (1994), p. 337.

<sup>248</sup>The foundation stone was laid by Doge Andrea Gritti on 15 August 1534, the choir was in use in 1554 and the church was consecrated in 1582. Deborah Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino. Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 66, 70.

<sup>249</sup>Howard (1975), p. 67.

liturgical practices. This phenomenon involved churches from different religious orders, which generally did not have to apply to higher authorities to change choir placements. Rather, the new choir placement resulted from individual churches responding to unique situations.

## 4.7 Implications of the new choir placement

Changes in choir placement had a dramatic effect on the disposition of sacred space in the church interior, the liturgical use of different areas and the everyday celebration of divine office. The liturgical guidelines examined in the previous chapter assumed that the choir would be situated in front of the high altar and divided into two sides. The new arrangement not only affected the liturgical use of the choir but also the design of new choir stalls intended to fit in semi-circular or rectangular spaces behind the high altar.

Choirs situated in front of the high altar in two L-shapes had four entrances, an even number of seats and two dignitaries' stalls at the west end. However, stalls designed to fit around the curved walls of an apse had only two entrances, an odd number of stalls and either one or three dignitaries' stalls in the centre of the upper row. Contracts for sixteenth-century choirs in this new position requested odd numbers of seats and emphasis on a central stall.

In Ferrara Cathedral, the new location of the choir in the apse afforded novel ways to infuse the whole building with iconographic meaning. After the rebuilding of the *cappella maggiore* in 1498, the stalls were commissioned to Bernardino Canozi (son of Cristoforo) in 1501.<sup>250</sup> The centrally-placed cathedra, which was the last item of furniture to be completed in 1532–33, is taller, wider and more decorated than the other stalls.<sup>251</sup> A relief of the Ferrarese protector St George slaying the dragon appears on the cathedra canopy, providing a visual focus for the choir. It also recalls the same motif depicted on the central tympanum of the Romanesque façade; both images depict St George approaching the dragon from the left set within semi-circular frames (Fig. 168).<sup>252</sup> The two reliefs

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<sup>250</sup>The contract does not survive but is reported by Scalabrini in his *Memoria della Cattedrale di Ferrara*, cited in Frisoni (1982), p. 539.

<sup>251</sup>The throne was completed in 1532–33 by Ludovico da Brescia and the French carver Angelo Luchino. Bagatin (1991), p. 74.

<sup>252</sup>An inscription on the semi-circular architrave of the central portal gives the date 1135 for the completion of the façade, although its authenticity has been questioned. Charles M. Rosenberg, *The Este Monuments*

form an axis of meaning stretching from the westernmost to the easternmost points of the building, reinforcing a strong civic identity. The importance of this axis would have been strengthened in 1593, when relics of St George were placed in the high altar, situated between the two reliefs.<sup>253</sup>

The Ferrara Cathedral choir also provides insights into the new seating arrangements with three, instead of two, dignitaries' seats. The seat to the right of the cathedra has an intarsia panel depicting the staircase known as the 'scala coperta' in the *Cortile Nuovo* of the Palazzo Estense, an immediately recognisable landmark in the city just opposite the cathedral and built by Ercole d'Este around 1473.<sup>254</sup> The panel is particularly striking given that the rest of the stall-backs show generic still-lives or cityscapes. The staircase in the intarsia panel also bears the Este heraldic eagle, although this symbol is not present on the actual building (Fig. 169). Could this image of civic power in Ferrara have signified that this was the Duke's seat in the choir? Since the Duke financed the new choir extension, it is likely that he also paid for the stalls. In apsidal choirs, one of the three centrally-placed dignitaries' stalls could have been used by a lay person, conferring him high status without usurping the order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Images of St George and the Este *scala coperta* in the choir reinforced the strong links between church and state in the cathedral, present since its foundation.<sup>255</sup>

Iconography also featured prominently in the central stalls of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, installed around 1510. The new furniture, incorporating panels from the fifteenth-century choir, responded to the curved layout of the space. The central stall-back shows the Milanese patron saint, St Ambrose, enthroned and raising his right hand in blessing (Fig. 170). To either side, Dominican saints appear in the stall-backs, in an arrangement reminiscent of an altarpiece. To the left (Fig. 171a), St Dominic is shown holding a lily, book and a model of the church, above an inscription which reads 'IMPLE PAT[ER] QUOD

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*and Urban Development in Renaissance Ferrara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 16. An inscription beneath the tympanum relief of St George names the artist as a certain Nicolò: 'ARTIFICEM GNARUM QUI SCULPSEKIT HOC NICOLAUM/ HUC CONCURRENTES LAUDENT PER SECUA GENTES' and Sautto identifies the sculptor as Nicolò da Ficarolo. Alfonso Sautto, *Il Duomo di Ferrara dal 1135 al 1935* (Ferrara: S. A. Industrie Grafiche, 1934), p. 9.

<sup>253</sup>The high altar was reconsecrated on 9 May 1593. Sautto (1934), p. 31.

<sup>254</sup>Rosenberg notes that the new courtyard must have been completed by mid-1473. Rosenberg (1997), p. 112.

<sup>255</sup>For Rosenberg, the founding of the new cathedral in the 1130s represented Ferrarese independence from Ravennate control. Rosenberg (1997), p. 16.

DIXISTI' (fulfill Father, what you have said).<sup>256</sup> To the right (Fig. 171b), an image of St Peter Martyr holding a lily and open book is accompanied by the words 'AVREOLA TRIPLICI DOTATUS' (endowed with threefold golden).<sup>257</sup>

In addition to significant figurative iconography on the stall-backs, the three central stalls have geometric patterns on their seat-backs, further distinguishing their status. The remainder of the stalls at Santa Maria delle Grazie are arranged in pairs across the choir, including two more Dominican saints, two images of archangels, and the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.<sup>258</sup> At the western entrances to the choir, only the southern stall has special iconography, depicting St Sebastian holding two arrows, a sword and martyr's palm. The choir of Santa Maria delle Grazie shows how the expression of hierarchy could be adapted for a curved space. Instead of two dignitaries' stalls, three central stalls were given elevated status through the use of additional intarsia patterns and distinctive iconography.

At San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna, the stalls by Paolo Sacca show a more subtle approach to hierarchy. The *cappella maggiore* at San Giovanni in Monte was enlarged at the expense of Beata Elena dall'Oglio in 1517, and the stalls were commissioned to Paolo Sacca and his nephew Giovanni Antonio in 1518.<sup>259</sup> The stall-backs have standard perspective intarsia scenes which alternate between cityscapes and still lifes in cupboards, creating a pleasing visual balance between light and dark backgrounds. As in Santa Maria delle Grazie, the three central seats display ornate geometric patterns on the seat-backs, which subtly distinguish them from the rest of the stalls (Fig. 172). In the choir contract, the woodworkers were obliged to construct thirty-nine stalls, of which thirteen were to be done by Giovanni Antonio.<sup>260</sup> The odd number of stalls meant that three central stalls could be distinguished, and enabled the choir to be installed comfortably around the curved walls of the apse.

At San Prospero in Reggio Emilia, new stalls were commissioned to Cristoforo de Venetiis in 1544, with the proviso that panels from the fifteenth-century choir be incorporated (Fig.

<sup>256</sup>This text is taken from 'O spem miram', the thirteenth-century responsory in honour of St Dominic. <http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/cds/sym96145.htm> (accessed 5 June 2009).

<sup>257</sup>The text is taken from the antiphon 'Petrus novus' sung at Lauds on the feast of St Peter Martyr. <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/MMDB/Feasts/114042900.htm> (accessed 5 June 2009).

<sup>258</sup>The Dominican saints are on stalls 16 and 26, the archangels are on stalls 18 and 24, the Virgin Mary is on stall 10 and Mary Magdalene on stall 32, whom Ciati identifies as Mary of Egypt. Ciati (1983), p. 215.

<sup>259</sup>Fabbri (1976), p. 145.

<sup>260</sup>Gurrieri and Gurrieri (1985), p. 43: 'trigintanovem cum stalla seu sedes alta seu alte ultra stalla seu sedes bassa seu bassas'.

165).<sup>261</sup> The choir had already been moved behind the high altar in 1504, so the old choir stalls were probably in a bad state of repair. The 1544 contract shows the new emphasis placed on the central stall—‘la sedia di meggio’—which had to be higher than the other stalls.<sup>262</sup> Specific iconography was chosen by the canons of San Prospero for the three central stalls: the Resurrection in the middle stall with saints Prospero on the left and Venerius on the right.<sup>263</sup> In addition, de Venetiis was also contracted to make an odd number of stalls to fit in the curved apse— thirty-five including the central stall.<sup>264</sup>

Contracts and surviving apsidal choirs show how patrons and woodworkers adapted to new choir placements. Emphasis was placed on the central stalls, which in Ferrara Cathedral, Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan and San Prospero in Reggio Emilia, depicted patron saints. The spatial arrangement of the stalls focussed attention on this central stall, which was now aligned with the central east-west axis of the church.

## 4.8 Conclusion

The issue of moving choirs and the creation of retrochoirs in late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Italian churches remains under-researched and sometimes misunderstood. The aim of this chapter has been to discuss in further detail pre-Tridentine examples in northern Italy, and especially to examine the motivations for such a fundamental change in the use of liturgical space. The influence of the Council of Trent cannot be completely denied, as an increasing number of churches removed choirs in the second half of the sixteenth century. However, the practice was simply a continuation of earlier spatial renovations which were generally unrelated to liturgical reforms. Over time, devotional reasons such as the desire for the laity to see the Host became more important, but a paucity of textual sources means that this theory cannot be validated.

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<sup>261</sup>The contract is dated 7 July 1544 and is transcribed in Monducci (1961), p. 258: ‘cum patto che li stalli vecchi si possano mettere in opera, cioè li quadri del coro vecchio ponerli di sotto a dette prospettive’. On the San Prospero stalls, see Bagatin (1997), pp. 61–69.

<sup>262</sup>Monducci (1961), p. 258: ‘salvo perhò la sedia di meggio che sia secondo il disegno fatto più alta che le altre’.

<sup>263</sup>Monducci (1961), p. 258: ‘faccia la resurettione del Nostro Signore et allo destro stallo del detto stallo di meggio vi sia una figura di San Prospero et al sinistro stallo apresso quello ditto di meggio vi sia la figura di San Venerio’.

<sup>264</sup>Monducci (1961), p. 258: ‘Li quali stalli ov sia Sedie di sopra serano n. xxxv computata quella di meggio’. In 1546, de Venetiis was asked to make two further stalls on both the upper and lower rows, for which he was paid an additional 20 scudi. Bagatin (1997), p. 62.

As noted in previous chapters, there were more similarities between the religious orders than were perhaps expected. Churches belonging to the Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian mendicant orders moved their choirs in this period, as did canons' churches and cathedrals. Within the religious orders, some communities chose to have retrochoirs whilst others maintained a traditional choir placement. Primary sources do not associate new choir arrangements with monastic reform, as Ackerman seems to suggest.<sup>265</sup> In her analysis of the Observant Franciscan church of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, Howard also related the new architectural forms to mendicant reform.<sup>266</sup> However, some of the earliest churches to adopt retrochoirs, such as San Francesco in Brescia, were conventual. Others, such as San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, built retrochoirs at a relatively late stage when they had become acceptable architectural forms.

Religious communities made changes to choir placement for a variety of different reasons, related to the visual appeal of the space or to the practical use of the building. In some situations, choirs were removed only a few decades after their initial installation, showing that there must have been compelling reasons to risk damaging such expensive objects. Except for the Cassinese congregation, religious orders generally did not produce guidelines on choir placement, and even Carlo Borromeo stated that either placement was acceptable. As we shall see in the following chapter, Benedictine nuns did not observe an authoritative choir placement, showing that similar inconsistencies pervaded female religious houses. Textual sources reveal that decisions were made by individual churches generally without recourse to higher authorities.

Analysis of choir spaces can uncover unexpected outcomes difficult to reconcile with their religious function. For instance, iconography of intarsia choirs was often secular, deriving from the limitations of the technique rather than the desire to create symbolic images. Choirs could be moved for practical and aesthetic reasons often at the insistence of a layman, and the area could be used for non-liturgical activities in the presence of the laity. Unlike altars, choirs were not the subject of restrictive legislation regarding their placement or decoration. This led to expansive variety in both the decoration of stalls

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<sup>265</sup>James S. Ackerman, 'L'architettura religiosa veneta in rapporto a quella toscana del Rinascimento', *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio* 19 (1977), pp. 151–52.

<sup>266</sup>Howard (1975), p. 67: 'The reforms in the Franciscan order at this time were pressing for a return to the initial simplicity of the movement, and it seems likely that Zorzi's ideas about the form of the new church were affected by this search for spiritual purification.'

and their location in the church interior. Case studies on two churches in Venice in the following chapters will examine the choirs of individual communities, placing them in the wider context of churches of the same order. Amid the development of various accepted arrangements, the location of individual choir precincts was the result of several complex factors.



## Chapter 5

# The Choir Stalls of San Zaccaria in Venice

In his guidebook to Venice, Marin Sanudo *il giovane* listed his top twelve activities for gentlemen visitors, including visiting such well-known sights as the basilica of San Marco, the Rialto market, and glass factories on Murano. Perhaps less predictably, he also recommended that visitors hear the nuns singing in San Zaccaria or Le Vergini, two high-status nunneries in Venice populated by aristocratic women.<sup>1</sup> The convent of San Zaccaria, situated behind San Marco, was famous for the richness of its art, music and inhabitants. In the church itself, the setting for such beautiful music was no less impressive, comprising a large choir embellished with intarsia, micro-architecture and gilding.

Focussing attention on this Benedictine nuns' choir will synthesise the ideas and themes examined in the previous four chapters. This case study will consider the style and decoration of the stalls, the detailed choir contract, liturgical documents which show the practical use of the area, and the original position of the choir. Reference to the previous thematic chapters will allow the choir of San Zaccaria to be placed in its artistic and documentary context, highlighting both common and unusual features. Whereas in the previous chapters, many examples have been cited to reconstruct general progressions, themes and comparisons, this chapter will show how they can be applied to an individual choir precinct. In particular, the case study will illustrate how study of choir stalls can

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<sup>1</sup>Marin Sanudo il giovane, *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero La città di Venetia (1493–1530)*, ed. by Angela Caracciolo Aricò (Milan: Cisalpino La Goliardica, 1980), p. 62: 'Queste sono le cosse notabile si mostrano à signori in Veniexia . . . Cantar monache, o alle Verzene o a San Zaccaria'.

shed light on broader issues of ritual and space, artistic integration, and female patronage.

The construction of the San Zaccaria choir is well recorded. Fortuitously, documents survive pertaining to the construction of the choir, together with most of the stalls themselves, and parts of the Gothic church. Commissioned from the Cozzi workshop in 1455 in a highly detailed contract, the completed stalls occupied a large part of the narrow Gothic nave until they were rearranged into their current formation in 1595. However, despite the wealth of material surrounding the San Zaccaria choir, important questions still remain. Why did the nuns draft such a detailed and prescriptive contract? What were the sources for the style and iconography of the stalls? How was the choir arranged in the church and used in liturgical services? How did the commissioning of new choir stalls relate to other areas of patronage in the late fifteenth century, including most strikingly the new church itself?

Art produced for and by nuns has been a source of fascination for art historians concerned with issues of gender and enclosure.<sup>2</sup> Although this has mainly focussed on altarpieces and architecture, choir arrangements have also been discussed.<sup>3</sup> However, the issue is still little understood. Few choirs from Benedictine nuns' churches exist in near complete forms, highlighting the importance of the San Zaccaria furniture and its potential to give insights into broader arguments. Was there any style or iconography deemed particularly appropriate for Benedictine nuns? Were nuns' choirs subject to rules or conventions for their arrangement and location? Comparisons will be made with other nuns' choirs to place the San Zaccaria furniture in the wider context of contractual obligations, style and placement.

## 5.1 The artistic and architectural setting

The mid- to late-fifteenth century was a period of fervid artistic and architectural patronage at San Zaccaria. Upon the election of Abbess Elena Foscari in 1437, the community embarked upon several decades of artistic patronage, culminating in the building of the

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<sup>2</sup>For example, Julian Gardner, 'Nuns and Altarpieces: Agendas for Research', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 30 (1995), pp. 27–57.

<sup>3</sup>See Gardner (1995), pp. 51–52. For north-European examples, see Carola Jäggi, 'Eastern Choir or Western Gallery? The Problem of the Place of the Nuns' Choir in Königsfelden and other Early Mendicant Nunneries', *Gesta* 40, no. 1 (2001), pp. 79–93.

new church from 1458. The extension of the apse of the old church and the commissioning of frescoes, altarpieces, sculptures and choir stalls has been a source of fascination for art historians concerned with female patronage and artistic integration.<sup>4</sup> Most intriguing are the reasons behind the nuns' decision to devote great expense and effort on the restoration and decoration of their old church only to start building a new church concurrently (Figg. 173, 174).

Founded according to legend by St Magnus, Bishop of Oderzo, in the seventh century, the first church of San Zaccaria was built between 811 and 829.<sup>5</sup> Tradition states that the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Armenian donated land in Venice and the full body relic of San Zaccaria, a piece of the true cross and a thorn from the crown of thorns, the veil of St Agatha and some pieces of the Virgin's clothing.<sup>6</sup> In 855 the convent gained the relics of San Pancrazio and Santa Sabina. The second church was built in two projects in the twelfth century, following the 1105 fire and restoration in 1172–74. The nave had three aisles divided by two parallel rows of columns with eagle capitals, a motif which would later reappear in Giovanni Buora's carved capitals in the Renaissance church.<sup>7</sup> In 1440 or shortly before, the nuns rebuilt the *cappella maggiore* in a Gothic style, based on a plan forming seven sides of a dodecagon.<sup>8</sup>

Patronage under Abbess Elena Foscari, sister of Doge Francesco Foscari, started in 1437 with the purchase of a new organ: 'from her own expense she bought a large organ . . . which honours God and adorns the church.'<sup>9</sup> The *cappella maggiore* was decorated with frescoes, three altarpieces and a crucifix, also financed by the abbess, prioress Marina Donato, and the nuns Agnesina Justinian and Margarita Donato. Signed and dated August 1442,

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<sup>4</sup>Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), Bernard Aikema, 'La Cappella d'oro di San Zaccaria: arte, religione e politica nella Venezia del doge Foscari', *Arte Veneta* 57 (2000), Gary M. Radke, 'Nuns and Their Art: The Case of San Zaccaria in Renaissance Venice', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001).

<sup>5</sup>Richard J. Goy, *Building Renaissance Venice. Patrons, Architects and Builders c.1430–1500* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>Dominico Bozzoni, *Il silenzio di S. Zaccaria snodato nella publicatione, dell'antichissima origine, prosperosi ingrandimenti, et amplissimi privilegij, dell'insigne suo monistero di Venezia* (Venice: Brigna, 1678), pp. 163–64.

<sup>7</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 61. Goy (2006), pp. 167–68.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Dellwing, 'Die Kirchen San Zaccaria in Venedig. Eine ikonologische Studie', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 37 (1974), p. 228. Herbert Dellwing, *Die Kirchenbaukunst des späten Mittelalters in Venetien* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), pp. 125–26.

<sup>9</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 6, Memoriale, fol. 48v: 'mccccxxvii. adi xxii. decembris la venerabele madona Lena Fosschari dignissima abadesa del monestie e convento del padre nostro Santo Zacharia profetta de i suo beni spexe far una horgano grandio el qual a hono de dio e adornamento dela gliexia.'

the vault was frescoed by the Florentine Andrea del Castagno and Francesco da Faenza with figures of God the Father and the four Evangelists. John the Baptist appears on the extreme left vault cell opposite his father Zacharias on the right (Fig. 175).<sup>10</sup> Ten busts of prophets surrounded by laurel wreaths, ribbons and putti appear on the entrance arch. Castagno may have received this Venetian commission through Doge Foscari's close ties with Florence, or the nuns' links with the Benedictine convent of Sant'Apollonia in Florence, where the artist would later complete a fresco cycle.<sup>11</sup> According to Salmi, the Tuscan style of Castagno was not suited to Venetian taste, so carved and gilded altarpieces were commissioned in a purely Gothic style.<sup>12</sup>

Dated 1443, the three altarpieces in the *cappella maggiore* are associated both with relics housed at San Zaccaria and certain nuns who financed their decoration. Completed by the workshop of Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Ludovico da Forlì, the altarpieces display gilded carving and painted panels in intricate micro-architectural frameworks. The central field of the high altarpiece originally exhibited a silver panel or 'pala d'ariento', but now houses painted panels of the Virgin and Child and saints Blaise and Martin (Fig. 176).<sup>13</sup> The silver panel, which was melted down around 1810, was part of a tradition of such panels in Venice and northern Italy and according to Christa Gardner von Teuffel, probably did not depict the Virgin Mary.<sup>14</sup> At a cost of 180 ducats, the high altarpiece was financed by the abbess Elena Foscari and prioress Marina Donato, represented by their saintly namesakes: St Helena is the carved figure on the far right, while St Marina appears on the far left.<sup>15</sup> The reverse side of the altarpiece resembles a reliquary cupboard, painted with images of saints whose relics were conserved at the convent.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>John R. Spencer, *Andrea del Castagno and his Patrons* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 96.

<sup>11</sup>Aikema suggested that Doge Foscari was involved in the commission. Aikema (2000), p. 34. Andrea del Castagno painted a fresco cycle of the *Last Supper*, *Resurrection*, *Crucifixion* and *Entombment* in Sant'Apollonia in 1445–47.

<sup>12</sup>Mario Salmi, 'Ancora di Andrea del Castagno dopo il restauro degli affreschi di San Zaccaria a Venezia', *Bollettino d'Arte* 11 (1958), p. 135.

<sup>13</sup>Aikema (2000), p. 25.

<sup>14</sup>Other metal altarpieces in Venice include the Pala d'oro in San Marco and the high altarpiece of San Salvador, while outside Venice examples include the altarpiece in Sant'Ambrogio in Milan and the pala project in Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, which was later abandoned. Christa Gardner von Teuffel, 'Nuns, Prophets and Memory: The forgotten Pala d'Argento and the Vivarini Shop at San Zaccaria, Venice' lecture at the Renaissance Research Seminar, Courtauld Institute of Art, 30 April 2008 (lecture to be published forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup>Radke (2001), p. 442.

<sup>16</sup>The top row shows saints Stephen, Thomas, Gregory, Zacharias, Theodore, Leo I, and Sabina, while the lower row shows saints Peter, Claudio, Tarasio, Nereo, Achilleo and Pancrazio. At the top is the figure

The altar on the north wall of the chapel is dedicated to Santa Sabina, and decorated with an altarpiece depicting saints Jerome, Sabina, and Lizerio in the main panels and saints Margaret and Agatha above (Fig. 177).<sup>17</sup> In the centre of the traceried predella, a large roundel contains an inscription stating that Chamberlain Margherita Donato patronised the altarpiece, which cost eighty-three gold ducats plus an extra forty-two for an angel holding a candle above.<sup>18</sup> On the south wall, an altar dedicated to Corpus Christi is adorned with an altarpiece featuring carved narrative scenes in the central panels depicting the Man of Sorrows in the lower field, the women weeping at the tomb in the centre, and the resurrection of Christ in the upper field (Fig. 178). Attendant figures of Pope Caius and Pancras appear on the left and Roman martyr saints Nereo and Achilleo on the right.<sup>19</sup> Chamberlain Agnesina Giustinian provided 106 ducats for this altarpiece, plus forty ducats for an angel holding a candle above and twelve ducats for the Holy Blood tabernacle.<sup>20</sup>

Aside from the architectural work, the most costly item bought and the first to be listed in the nuns' *Memoriale* book was a crucifix costing 214 ducats and its carved beam costing thirty ducats.<sup>21</sup> The great expense of the crucifix, which no longer survives, could indicate the use of expensive materials such as gold and precious stones. Conversely, as Gary Radke has suggested, it could have formed a larger group including figures of saints Mary and John.<sup>22</sup> It was referred to as the 'crox grande dela capela' in 1462 when a craftsman was paid to gild the foliage beneath the cross, presumably referring to the carved beam.<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, this could describe foliage around the cross, perhaps in a similar stylistic spirit to Paolo Veneziano's crucifix for the Dominican convent in Dubrovnik, dated between 1348 and 1358, which is surrounded by gilded flowers and foliage (Fig. 179).<sup>24</sup>

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of Christ the Redeemer. Aikema (2000), p. 32.

<sup>17</sup>Aikema (2000), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Radke (2001), p. 442.

<sup>19</sup>Aikema (2000), p. 33.

<sup>20</sup>Radke (2001), p. 442.

<sup>21</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 6, *Memoriale*, fol. 49r: 'E per adornamento dela dita chapela e fato xhmi (?) christo chornefiso con i suo adornamenti che armeta duc. ccx iii. e per lo bordonal intaiado che softie la chroxie duc. xxx.'

<sup>22</sup>Radke (2001), p. 442n.

<sup>23</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, *Libro della Fabbrica*, fol. 95a: 'la spexa seguita in dorar la foia che e soto la crox granda nela capela.'

<sup>24</sup>Guarnieri suggests that the cross was commissioned in 1348 but erected in 1358 atop the now demolished tramezzo. Cristina Guarnieri, 'Per la restituzione di due croci perdute di Paolo Veneziano: il leone marciano del Museo Correr e i dolenti della Galleria Sabauda', in *Circolazione di modelli, opere e artisti nell'Alto Adriatico tra VIII e XV secolo (forthcoming)*, ed. by Federica Toniolo and Giovanna Valenzano (Padua 2009), p. 132. Image from <http://www.aiwaz.net/panopticon/crucifix/gi4674c512>, accessed 7th April 2009.

Payments recorded in the San Zaccaria archive can help reconstruct divisions of sacred space in the nuns' church. In 1451, another cross was bought, together with two statues of saints Zaccaria and Benedict, which are now situated on pedestals on the side walls of the *cappella maggiore* (Fig. 180). At a cost of 170 ducats, this cross was specified as being 'in the choir' and in later documents 'in the middle of the church', possibly associated with a screen.<sup>25</sup>

Documents do not confirm whether the nave screen itself had six or eight columns. Paoletti imagined that the cross and two statues formed part of a screen between the choir and the rest of the church, also incorporating six red columns for which maestro Gasparino sculpted the capitals in the early 1460s.<sup>26</sup> However, Susan Connell suggested that a payment for eight sculpted wooden capitals could refer to the choir screen.<sup>27</sup> The precise number of columns cannot be confirmed exactly, but archival sources hint at the general aesthetic appearance of the screen. Various references in ceremonial writings to 'windows which looked into the church' from the back of the choir could refer to the choir screen.<sup>28</sup> Openings between the columns of the choir screen could be interpreted as windows, perhaps creating a similar effect to the fourteenth-century screen in San Marco by the *dalle Masegne* (Fig. 182).

New choir stalls were commissioned from Marco and Francesco Cozzi di Vicenza in 1455 in a detailed contract which will be examined in detail below (Fig. 183). Presumably due to the risk of damage caused by architectural repairs, the furniture was not installed until 1464, the date of an inscription on the side of stall W9.<sup>29</sup> In 1463, master Bartolomeo was paid for cleaning the cross 'in mezza giexia', perhaps because it became dirty during

<sup>25</sup> ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 6, Memoriale, fol. 48r, note 9: 'Mccccli. Soto la santa Reverendissima aja(?) Ellena abbadessa. e sue facto la croxe che e nel corro e misser San Zacharia e San Benedecto di beni del convento e costo duct clxx'. ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, Libro della Fabbrica, fol. 95a: 'adi x viij marzo mcccclxij per li dai contradi per refoiame de la cros da meza giexia'.

<sup>26</sup> Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 63. I have been unable to find reference to the six red columns in the *Libro della Fabbrica*.

<sup>27</sup> Connell (1988), p. 194. ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, Libro della Fabbrica, fol. 64a: 'mcccclxi adi v dicembris. Per le dare contadi a maestro Gasparin taipiera per caparo de uno marchado facto con lui a far lidi otto per ducati 3 de manifatura per lido come apar percarta de nostro domino bernardo nodaro ducati 1'. Connell's interpretation of the word 'lido' with capitals presumably comes from an early reference in the Libro, where columns are bought 'con le sue basse e lidi'. Ibid, fol. 26a.

<sup>28</sup> ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 5, Ceremoniale, fol. 7r (hereafter referred to as Ceremoniale): 'Poi madonna l'abadessa con madonna la priora sene vien con tute le done driedo el choro dove ele fenestre che uarda in giexia'.

<sup>29</sup> The inscription reads 'FRA[N]CISC[US] E MA[R]S[US] [DE] VICETIA FR[ATRE]S FECI[T] H[OC] OP[US] 1464'. The stalls are numbered according to their position on the east and west walls of the present chapel of Sant'Atanasio, starting from the south side.

the architectural repairs.<sup>30</sup>

In a recent work, Richard Goy has untangled records pertaining to the restoration of the architecture of the Gothic church, from around 1458 to 1463.<sup>31</sup> Changes to the brick façade probably formed the first intervention in the winter of 1458–59, including the insertion of a large double doorway from the campo to the granary. In 1459, blind arcading was added to the top of the façade, and between 1461 and 1463 various craftsmen were employed to repair the roof.<sup>32</sup> Work progressed speedily partly due to a donation of 1,000 ducats from the Venetian Senate in 1461. On 30 October 1462, a *festa* was held to celebrate the completion of the roof.<sup>33</sup> In a newly-repaired church, furnished with impressive choir stalls, altarpieces and screens, the nuns were well equipped to celebrate their services in the highly sophisticated manner for which they became renowned.

At the same time as these improvements to the Gothic church, a new Renaissance basilica was taking shape to its immediate north. Rather than being a replacement for the old church, the new church was seen as an extra church for different functions. In fact, in the *Libro della Fabbrica*, the old church was either referred to as the ‘picola giexia’ or ‘la capela delle done’, suggesting that it was a private space.<sup>34</sup> Conversely, the 1456 *breve* of Callixtus III which allocated 2000 ducats to the new building project cited the church’s popularity with the Venetian people, suggesting both that the old church was becoming overcrowded and that the new church was primarily for the use of the laity.<sup>35</sup>

The new church was presided over by a number of head architects, including Luca Taiamonte, Antonio di Marco Gambello, and Mauro Codussi, who mainly worked on the façade.<sup>36</sup> The radical design comprised a three-aisled nave of three bays, and a raised high altar area surrounded by an ambulatory with four radiating chapels. The façade is a sophisticated design in sparkling white Istrian stone, and the nave is crowned with a steep cupola, echoing those on nearby San Marco. Construction of the new church required

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<sup>30</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 63.

<sup>31</sup>Goy (2006), p. 171.

<sup>32</sup>Goy (2006), p. 171.

<sup>33</sup>The last consignment of roof tiles arrived in March 1463. Goy (2006), p. 171.

<sup>34</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, fol. 95a: ‘a maestro Zorzi . . . depento . . . faza dela giexia piccola’. ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, fol. 118a: ‘Coro uno in ghiexia nela capela delle done’.

<sup>35</sup>Dated 3 June 1456, quoted in Flaminio Cornelio, *Ecclesiae venetae antiquis monumentis nunc etiam primum editis illustratae ac in decades distributae* (Venice: Jo. Baptistae Pasquali, 1749), vol. 13, p. 389. ‘ad illam magnus populi concursus habeatur’.

<sup>36</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 64.

the demolition of the north aisle of the Gothic church. According to Paoletti, this aisle must have been flattened in 1462, since in March of this year paintings were removed from the altars and walls of the church, presumably to prevent damage.<sup>37</sup> The new church must have been largely finished in 1505, when Giovanni Bellini painted his San Zaccaria altarpiece, situated in the second nave bay on the left. Responding to specific lighting conditions, Bellini depicted saints Peter, Catherine, Lucy and Jerome in a serene landscape lit from the right. Although it must have been completed decades before, the new church was only officially consecrated in 1543.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that the new Renaissance church was built without the facility of a choir area is significant. The relatively short three-bay nave and ambulatory with its radiating chapels—a unique feature in Venetian church architecture—left little room for the choir either before or behind the high altar (Fig. 174). Evidently the new basilica was never intended to accommodate the liturgical needs of the nuns' daily services. The nuns could use the newly restored Gothic church (minus the north aisle) as their main site of liturgy until further architectural remodelling took place in 1595. When building of the new church was underway in the 1460s, the nuns' Gothic church was still being improved. In 1464, the same year that the choir stalls were installed, Marco Cozzi was paid for making a door leading from the parlatorio into the church, probably in the same intarsia technique.<sup>39</sup> The following year, a bench or sedilia was purchased for the *cappella maggiore* behind the high altar, showing that the area was very much in use.<sup>40</sup> In 1476, the organ in the old church was replaced and the old organ sold to the master of the organ for twenty ducats.<sup>41</sup>

In 1595, the nave of the old church was divided into two large rooms: the present chapel of Sant'Atanasio which houses the choir stalls and various paintings, and a western space which currently acts as a storeroom (Fig. 181). On the side of stall E8 an inscription records that the stalls were restored in 1595, indicating the rearrangement into their present

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<sup>37</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 65.

<sup>38</sup>Umberto Franzoi and Dina Di Stefano, *Le chiese di Venezia* (Venice: Alfieri, 1976), p. 401.

<sup>39</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, Libro della Fabbrica, fol. 116a: 'adi xxij mazo per le doe contadj a maestro Marco intaiador per parti di suo manifatura di una porta che va di parladorio in giexia'.

<sup>40</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 6, Memoriale, fol. 50r, note 4: 'di uno bancho nela capela di San Zacharia driedo l'altar'.

<sup>41</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 6, Memoriale, fol. 55r: 'mccccclxxvi adi. xv. auosto...in questo zorno et milesimo nui havemo conpidamente satisfato el pagamento del organo nuova fato nel tempo dela Reverendissima madona Benedeta Trevisan dignissima Abbadessa...l'organo nostro vechio il qual fo dado al maistro de l'organo per prixio de duc .xx.'



configuration.<sup>42</sup> On 24 February 1600, the relics were removed from the nuns' church, processed to San Marco and subsequently installed in the Renaissance church in a ceremony presided over by the patriarch, Doge Marino Grimani and the Signoria.<sup>43</sup> At this point, the nuns finally relinquished their carefully planned liturgical space and their treasured relics.

## 5.2 The choir stalls contract

Fundamental to the organisation of sacred space in the Gothic church were the choir stalls, commissioned on 26 March 1455, in one of the most detailed surviving choir contracts (See transcription, Appendix B.8, p. 303).<sup>44</sup> The form and decoration of each part of the stalls was specified, with references to various existing choirs in Venetian churches. The contract uses specific Venetian terminology, deviating from terms used in the north-Italian documents analysed in Chapter Two. The contract has been used by Radke to suggest that the nuns were firmly in control of artistic patronage at San Zaccaria, specifying exact conditions and paying for the furniture themselves.<sup>45</sup> As we have seen, choir contracts often contained precise specifications, but the level of detail sets the San Zaccaria document apart. Although discussed and cited in part by Paoletti, Connell and Radke, the contract has not been fully transcribed or analysed in depth.

The document is divided into three sections: a preamble which lists the people present at the signing of the contract; specific conditions for the manufacture of the choir; and administrative details such as payment and time frame. The preamble states that in the presence of three male witnesses, the abbess Maria Donato and fifteen named nuns, made an agreement with two wood carvers, Francesco—'intagliatore lignaminus'—and his brother Marco *quondam* Zampetri da Vicenza, known by the surname Cozzi.<sup>46</sup> Radke was particularly struck by the close involvement of the nuns in the commissioning process, concluding that artistic commissions in San Zaccaria were reflective of the nuns' own

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<sup>42</sup>The inscription reads 'M.D.LXXXXV. T.G.A.RESTAVRE.F.HAEC.SEDILIA'.

<sup>43</sup>Radke (2001), p. 456.

<sup>44</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, Pergamene 1, loose sheet dated 26 March 1455.

<sup>45</sup>Radke (2001), pp. 449–51.

<sup>46</sup>Paoletti found a reference to the name Cozzi in a 1545 document. Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 84. For a biography of the Cozzi clan, see Sergio Guarino, 'Cozzi', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 30 (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1984), pp. 559–61 and Giuseppe Bergamini, 'Cozzi', in *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, vol. 22 (Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 1999), pp. 115–16.

desires.<sup>47</sup> Certainly in other choir contracts fewer members of the religious community tended to be present, but a lack of documents from Benedictine nunneries prevents direct comparisons.<sup>48</sup> In a similar case, at the signing of the choir contract for the Benedictine convent church of Sant’Uldarico in Parma in 1505, six nuns were present including the abbess, suggesting that the San Zaccaria situation was not unique.<sup>49</sup>

The contract then listed specific conditions for the choir stalls, beginning with the kneelers and foundations. The kneelers (‘*prospere*’) in front of the seats and the foundation (‘*suolo*’) with its step (‘*scagnolo*’) had to be arranged to provide several entrances to the stalls.<sup>50</sup> Substalls were often disposed to give access to upper stalls, but at San Zaccaria, which only had one row of stalls, kneelers provided this function. The *prospere* had to be decorated with intarsia, and together with the foundations, had to be of the same quality of wood and carving as the work in the chapel of the church of Sant’Elena (which no longer survives), but should be half a *braccia* larger. Within the kneelers cupboards had to be provided for the storage of books. The kneelers no longer survive, but extant examples give an insight into their possible appearance.<sup>51</sup>

The contract then described the stalls themselves. From the base to the arm-rests (‘*brazale*’), the seats had to conform to those in the chapel of Sant’Elena, except that the ‘*cavadura*’ or cavity under the capping should be changed. The *cavadura* can be identified as the ‘quadrant’ section, where occupants could rest their elbows whilst seated. Instead it should take the form of an intarsia colonnette surmounted by a flower or leaf, which should overhang (‘*sopravanza*’) the *cavadura*. The colonnette should have intarsia of the form (‘*almodo*’) used at Sant’Elena, but it is unclear to which part of the stall this refers, given that the quadrant design differs from the Sant’Elena model. The completed stalls at San Zaccaria demonstrate how closely the Cozzi brothers followed the contract (Fig. 184). Small colonnettes decorated with strips of intarsia *a toppo* are crowned by leaf finials

<sup>47</sup>Radke (2001), pp. 431, 449.

<sup>48</sup>Archivio di Stato Parma, Notai di Parma, filza 687, 4 April 1505. The contract is partially transcribed in Ronchini (1876), p. 314.

<sup>49</sup>In the Sant’Uldarico contract, six nuns were listed as present after Abbess Cabrina. ASPr, Notai di Parma, filza 687, at date 4 April 1505.

<sup>50</sup>Giuseppe Boerio, *Dizionario del dialetto veneziano* (Venice: Giovanni Cecchini, 1867), p. 614: ‘scagneto: predella . . . arnese di legname sul quale si siede, o sedendo si tengono i piedi’.

<sup>51</sup>Kneelers are visible on a photograph of the San Zaccaria stalls published by Paoletti, but these are not original. Paoletti (1893–1897), vol. 1, plate 37. Choir precincts with surviving kneelers include San Francesco in Brescia.

which rise above the concave quadrants.

Moving up the stall, the seat-capping or *brazale* had to be of the size and quality of those at Sant'Elena. The seat-capping had to be connected to the upper parts of the stall by a 'soaza', the plainly carved moulding just above the arm-rest.<sup>52</sup> In the completed stalls, this moulding binds the capping both to the stall-back and stall-dividers. The foliate carving of the stall-divider ('erte'), occupying the space between the capping and canopy, had to be carved from good wood of the same size and quality as the rest of the ensemble.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the carving had to be better than similar work in one of the stalls in the church of Santa Fosca, and of the same or larger dimensions.

The contract then continued to stipulate the stall-back or 'spalliera' decoration. Beneath an arch carved of larch and further foliate decoration, the centre of the stall-back had to be filled with intarsia in ties and knots ('ligamenti e groppi'). Again, the intarsia had to be congruous to work in Sant'Elena, excluding certain tracery designs. More specifically, the intarsia designs at San Zaccaria had to copy the first five seats in Sant'Elena, or other patterns of the same quality. The terms *ligamenti e groppi* were used to describe the geometric patterns created by interlocking strips of intarsia *a toppo*, a dominant feature of the San Zaccaria choir stalls. Whereas the generic term 'prospettiva' was employed in choir contracts requesting realistic intarsia scenes, the term *ligamenti e groppi* was used to describe abstract geometric patterning.

Under the canopy, above the stall-back and around the stall-divider, the contract requested a connecting element ('ligadura') of small arches ('archeti'), similar to those in Santi Giovanni e Paolo.<sup>54</sup> The term *ligadura* implies that this frieze bound together disparate parts of the stall. In the completed stalls, a frieze of small interlaced gothic arches appears between the stall-back and canopy and continues above the stall-dividers. The canopies or 'felze' were requested to emulate those in Sant'Elena. Connell suggested that these might have resembled simple vaults, similar to the coverings over gondole.<sup>55</sup> According to the contract, below the canopies of each seat there should be a mark ('marcha') of moulding (*soaza*) decorated with intarsia and similar to mouldings in Sant'Elena, within

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<sup>52</sup>Boerio (1867), p. 669: 'Soaza: cornice, ornamento de'quadri.'

<sup>53</sup>Boerio (1867), p. 254: 'Erta: stipite, i due membri laterali su' quali poggia l'architrave'.

<sup>54</sup>Boerio (1867), p. 371: 'Ligadura: l'atto del legare e quello spazio ch'è cinto dal legame stesso'.

<sup>55</sup>Connell (1988), p. 203. Boerio (1867), p. 264: 'Felce: quella tela che s'adatta sopra alcuni cerchi piegati a guisa d'arco e che formano una specie di capanna della gondola o navicello'.

which one face or side ('fazo') should be in relief. *Marcha* could refer to a specific measurement, as the verb 'marcare' was used in technical language to signify an amount.<sup>56</sup> This confusing passage could signify a lack of accepted terminology or our inability to translate specific terms. On the stalls themselves, deeply cut mouldings just below the canopy could be the so-called *marcha*.

A further clause specified decoration of the uppermost part of the stalls. Above the canopy a walnut frieze had to be larger than a version which traversed stall-backs in the choir of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The frieze should have foliage carving between two frames or cornices 'well-proportioned to the work', above which there should be an intarsia frieze. In the finished choir, a frieze of carved foliage indeed appears above the canopies, enclosed on both sides by intarsia patterning. The craftsmen slightly altered the original design to incorporate two intarsia friezes, producing a more symmetrical appearance. This section of the contract concluded with a note on materials. The whole choir should be made of walnut except for part (the 'cadera') of the kneelers and the foundation which should be larch. Reiterating the previous clauses, the contract confirmed that the wood, carving and decoration of the choir should imitate and not be estimated worse than furniture in Sant'Elena.

The final part of the contract related administrative details. The Cozzi were ordered to pay for all the materials, except for gold and paint, and would be paid ten gold ducats per stall in addition to food and wine provisions. Rather vaguely, the exact number of stalls and their measurements were not stated but had to conform to the will of the nuns. This omission was not particularly unusual, occurring in roughly half of the surviving choir contracts analysed in Chapter Two. A payment in the San Zaccaria account book shows that the Cozzi brothers were paid 490 gold ducats, which at a rate of ten ducats per stall equates to forty-nine stalls.<sup>57</sup> Starting the following Easter, the craftsmen were asked to produce a sample seat for the nuns' approval. If they were pleased, work could continue. If not, the Cozzi had to pay a debt, dismantle the work and still continue with the choir. The craftsmen were to be paid a deposit of twenty ducats, with the rest being paid in

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<sup>56</sup>Battaglia (1961–2002), vol. 9, p. 768: 'marcare... nel linguaggio tecnico e scientifico, segnare una misura'.

<sup>57</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, fol. 118a: 'Coro uno in ghiexia nela capela dele done... dele sedie xlviii... a ducati x. per sedia ducati 490'. Payment dated 18 December 1464.

three installments. When the wood was bought it had to be deposited in the workshop at the monastery, and starting from this initial purchase the craftsmen had two years to finish the choir. These administrative details were common in choir contracts, and the time frame was reasonable for the completion of the work.

Further payments in the *Libro della Fabbrica* were for painting and gilding of the ‘cape’ of the choir, the shell-niche canopies which replaced the originally proposed *felze*.<sup>58</sup> The painter Andrea da Murano was paid for gilding, and Giacomo da Girado for blue paint.<sup>59</sup> A late entry in the *Libro* dated 30 April 1465 recorded the gilding and painting of the *cape* and the ‘serafini’, obviously referring to the carved putti that appear in the canopy spandrels.<sup>60</sup>

Although imitation clauses were common in choir contracts, the sheer amount of references in the San Zaccaria document is unusual. Choir furniture in Sant’Elena was cited no less than eleven times in the San Zaccaria contract, Santi Giovanni e Paolo twice, and Santa Fosca once. As opposed to general similarities, the nuns wanted individual parts of their stalls to mimic furniture in other churches in Venice. None of the three model choirs survives, but descriptions can give us insights into their visual characteristics.

The monastery of Sant’Elena is situated on its own island to the far west of Venice, and in the fifteenth century belonged to the Monte Oliveto congregation.<sup>61</sup> The San Zaccaria contract referred specifically to furniture in the *chapel* in the church of Sant’Elena. I take this to indicate the chapel of Sant’Elena in the church of Sant’Elena, patronised by merchant Alessandro Borromeo before 1427 (Fig. 185). The contract was careful to use the word ‘capella’, and the dating of this chapel choir also fits in with the San Zaccaria chronology. This chapel is situated to the right of the nave, and should not be confused with the intarsia choir in the main body of the church, also now lost, which was installed towards the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>62</sup> In his will of 20 February 1427, Borromeo

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<sup>58</sup>Boerio (1867), p. 132: ‘Capa: . . . conchiglia’.

<sup>59</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, Libro della Fabbrica, fol. 95a: ‘adi vii Agosto . . . a maestro Andrea da murano pro parti de suo manufatura adorar de le cape del coro . . . adi xxvi novembre . . . a maestro Jacomo de girado . . . per azuro dado per le cape del coro’.

<sup>60</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 31, Libro della Fabbrica, fol. 118a: ‘adi xxx Aprile 1465 per penture e lamontar de oro azuro e fatura per le cape e serafini del coro’.

<sup>61</sup>Sant’Elena housed Augustinian regular canons until 21 September 1407, when the house was ceded to the Monte Oliveto congregation. Rodolfo Gallo, *La chiesa di Sant’Elena* (Venice: Comune di Venezia, 1926), p. 8.

<sup>62</sup>The lost choir stalls in the main body of the church were constructed between 1480 and 1505 by Fra Sebastiano da Rovigno, called Schiavone, assisted by the young Fra Giovanni da Verona. Gallo (1926),

wished to be buried in the chapel which he had made ('fabricari fecit') in front of the altar and beneath the wooden crucifix.<sup>63</sup> He also left funds for twenty-five monks of the Monte Olivetan order to say or sing mass and divine office every day in his chapel. Presumably this request necessitated the construction of stalls, vital for such an obligation.

Although not cited in his will, the anonymous author of an eighteenth-century history asserted that the choir was also financed by Borromeo to aid the monks in their duties: 'in fact he made the choir at his own expense with architecture in the Gothic style furnished with tracery and carvings all of walnut, and intarsia according to the use of those times.'<sup>64</sup> The San Zaccaria contract also referred to this combination of carvery and intarsia, although the nuns did not wish to imitate the tracery element. Stall-backs in Sant'Elena could have been similar to those in Reggio Emilia Cathedral, where blind gothic tracery appears above geometric intarsia designs (Fig. 33).

The sheer amount of references to the chapel of Sant'Elena in the San Zaccaria contract shows that the nuns greatly admired the woodwork in the Monte Olivetan monastery. But were they just imitating the stalls or the chapel as a whole? In the first half of the Quattrocento, the chapel of Sant'Elena was built and furnished at great expense exhibiting the same Gothic design sensibilities that San Zaccaria would later adopt. The chapel itself terminates with a polygonal vault pierced by two lancets and a central oculus, a design which would later be elaborated at San Zaccaria.<sup>65</sup> A large gilded Gothic polyptych stood on the high altar, prefiguring the three San Zaccaria altarpieces of the 1440s. The Sant'Elena altarpiece, by the Bolognese painter Michele di Matteo after 1427, depicts the Virgin and Child enthroned with the four female saints Lucy, Elena, Mary Magdalene and

p. 45. Bagatin (2000), p. 33. The stalls became famous in Venice for their intarsia depictions of world cities: 'è parimente notabile il coro, ne i cui sedili di tarsia, oltre a i disegni de i fogliami che vi sono, e le prospettive, vi sono ritratte in 34 sedili, 34 città delle principali del mondo a punto come elle sono, con molto artificio e vaghezza, e fu di mano del predetto F. Sebastiano da Rovigno converso di quest'ordine, che visse l'anno 1480.' Francesco Sansovino, quoted in Gallo (1926), p. 47. The dating of these stalls, however, proves that they are not the ones referred to in the San Zaccaria contract, as some historians have mistakenly assumed, such as Victoria Primhak, 'Women in Religious Communities: The Benedictine Convents in Venice, 1400–1550', Ph.D. thesis (The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>63</sup>ASV, CRS, Sant'Elena, busta 1, fol. 8v. Also cited in Gallo (1926), p. 16: 'Jussit voluit e ordinavit corpus suis sepeliri debere apud locum in monasteri sancte helene di venetjs castillane dyonisis in capella quam ipse testator fabricari fecit in dicta ecclesia sancte helene in terra ante altar ipsius capelle su crucifixo ligneo'.

<sup>64</sup>BMV, 9037, *Cose spettanti al Monasterio di S. Elena*, Second part, fol. 10r, quoted in Gallo (1926), p. 39: 'infatti a sue spese fece fabricar il coro con architettura alla gotica fornita di trafori ed intagli tutti di noce, e tarsie secondo l'uso di que tempi'. The choir stalls were sold in 1807. Alvise Zorzi, *Venezia scomparsa* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1972), p. 502.

<sup>65</sup>Dellwing noted the close architectural parallels between the two churches. Dellwing (1990), p. 126.

Catherine of Alexandria in the lower panels; the crucifixion and four evangelists in the upper fields; and the discovery of the true cross in five predella panels (Fig. 186).<sup>66</sup>

At Sant'Elena, the combination of Gothic architecture, a large gold polyptych and intarsia choir stalls would have created a very similar visual effect to the old church of San Zaccaria. The basic concept of a private choir chapel to the north of a more public church was reprised at San Zaccaria when the Renaissance church was built. Sant'Elena might have been used as a general model for work at San Zaccaria in the mid-fifteenth century to draw a comparison with the important relic cult at the monastery. At Sant'Elena, the full body relic of Constantine's mother was revered, while at San Zaccaria full body relics of saints including Zaccaria, Gregory Nazianzus and Theodore formed the basis of the nunnery's high status in Venice.<sup>67</sup>

The choir in the large Dominican church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo was cited twice in the San Zaccaria contract. Choir stalls were commissioned to the craftsmen Alberto and Arduino da Baiso and Johannes de Trigolis on 13 June 1422 in two almost identical contracts.<sup>68</sup> Little information was given about their style and decoration, except they were to cost four gold ducats each.<sup>69</sup> The choir had to include one 'major stall' which would, however, cost the same as the standard stalls.<sup>70</sup> The idea of a single major stall was paralleled in San Zaccaria, where the abbess's stall has significantly more elaborate decoration. Pilgrim Pietro Casola described the Dominicans' stalls 'on which neither gold nor carving has been spared', emphasising carving rather than intarsia decoration, typical

<sup>66</sup>At the foot of the panel representing St Catherine on the far right is an inscription: 'MICHAEL MATHEI DA BONONIA f.' Nepi Scirè argued that the altarpiece was probably commissioned by fellow Bolognese fra Bernardo de' Scapi, who was prior of the convent in 1427. This is the date of Borromeo's will, in which he mentioned a wooden crucifix which Nepi Scirè assumed was on the altar itself; it could however have been suspended from the chancel arch. Giovanna Nepi Scirè, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia* (Milan: Electa, 1998), p. 24, cat. 4.

<sup>67</sup>Bozzoni listed the full body relics in San Zaccaria: 'Il Corpo di S. Zaccaria Profetta Padre del Precursore, Titolare di questo Tempio à lui consacrato da Leone V. Imperatore di Constantinopoli; Il Corpo di S. Leone Pontefice riposto nell'Altar maggiore; Il Corpo di S. Gregorio Nazianzeno; Li Corpi di S. Nereo, e Achileo donati dalla Santità di Benedetto III. Som. Pontefice; Il Corpo di S. Pancratio Martire; Il Corpo di S. Sabina Vergine, ambidoi offerti dal medesimo Sommo Pontefice; Il Corpo di s. Tarasio Eremita qui trasportato dalla Pietà di Domenico Dandolo; Il Corpo di S. Teodoro Confessore.' Bozzoni (1678), pp. 163–64.

<sup>68</sup>The two contracts have the same wording except for the names: the first contract is for Alberto and Arduino, while the second is for Johannes de Trigolis. ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, busta 24 (Rolandino Bernardi), ff. 70v–71r.

<sup>69</sup>ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, busta 24 (Rolandino Bernardi), fol. 70v: 'solvendum et libere donandum vobis ducatos quatuor auri pro singlis sedium'.

<sup>70</sup>ASV, Cancelleria Inferiore, Notai, busta 24 (Rolandino Bernardi), fol. 70v: 'ducatos quatuor auri pro singulis sedium et una quaque sedium maiorem'.

of surviving work by the da Baiso family.<sup>71</sup>

Panels by Giovanni da Baiso from the choir in the Bolognese church of Santa Maria in Carrobbio from 1374 show carved images of saints within a lozenge framework. His choir in San Domenico in Ferrara, signed and dated 1384, displays tracery panels in the stall-backs and Gothic micro-architectural quadrants. Although no work by Arduino and Alberto da Baiso survives, it is likely that they continued this Gothic tradition. The monumental choir precinct in Santi Giovanni e Paolo incorporated a large *barco* or *coro Pietro* traversing the nave and housing two lay altars, which together with the wooden stalls was destroyed in 1682.<sup>72</sup>

Choir stalls in Santa Fosca were also used as a design source in the San Zaccaria contract, albeit only once. The location of the church was not specified so we can confidently assume that it was the Venetian foundation rather than the church on Torcello. The parish and collegiate church, situated in the Cannaregio sestiere, was rebuilt in 1679 and restored again in 1733, replacing the medieval fabric and rendering an assessment of the choir furniture impossible.<sup>73</sup> However, in his Apostolic Visitation of 1581, Bishop of Verona Agostino Valier commented that the choir in Santa Fosca was appropriate and pleasing.<sup>74</sup>

How the nuns formulated the detailed requests in the San Zaccaria contract is a source of fascination and speculation. Had they visited these male monastic and mendicant churches? They evidently did not observe *clausura* regulation given that they visited the nuns' church of Santa Croce in Giudecca in 1458, although whether they would go to a male house is more questionable.<sup>75</sup> Did the Cozzi brothers show drawings of the stalls to the nuns? Radke has noted that artists could bring model books to consultations, from which patrons could indicate their preferences.<sup>76</sup> Had the Cozzi workshop actually designed some of the choirs in question? Unfortunately here we are deep into the realms of speculation.

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<sup>71</sup>Hewett (1907), p. 138.

<sup>72</sup>The 1581 visitation by Lorenzo Campeggi and Agostino Valier to Venice described the choir precinct: 'chorus est in medio corpore gr..due (illegible word) ecclesiae cum sedilibus honorificis clausum ab omni parte, item et podium totam ecclesiam intersecans, quod inservit pro choro diebus solemnibus, quando fratres non possunt esse in superiori choro ob populum frequentiore'. Modesti (2002), p. 64. A chapel dedicated to St Catherine was erected in 1386 by Francesco Belli to the right of the entrance to the choir, while a further chapel dedicated to St Mark on the left of the screen was founded by Tommaso Mocenigo in 1422. Merotto Ghedini (2002), pp. 257, 261.

<sup>73</sup>Flaminio Corner, *Notizie storiche delle chiese e monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello* (Padua: Giovanni Manfre, 1758), p. 265. Franzoi and Di Stefano (1976), p. 123.

<sup>74</sup>Modesti (2002), p. 61: 'choro decenti sed aperto, suggestu'.

<sup>75</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 64.

<sup>76</sup>Radke (2001), p. 449.



The nuns of San Zaccaria wanted to emulate choirs in male monastic and mendicant churches perhaps because they were the most elaborate and well-known in Venice. In the 1478 choir contract for the Observant Franciscan nunnery of Santa Chiara on Murano, the choir of Santi Giovanni e Paolo was again cited as a model for part of the stalls, showing that it was highly admired amongst the religious of both genders in Venice.<sup>77</sup> Fifteenth-century choir contracts often requested the imitation of choirs in churches of different religious orders. What is less usual is the amount of detail specified about each part of the stalls. Clearly the visual aspects of the choir furniture was of great concern to the nuns, not unsurprising considering both the prominent position of the choir in the church and its central function in liturgical services involving such dignitaries as the Doge, the Patriarch and the Emperor.

### 5.3 The style and iconography of the stalls

Visual aspects of the stalls might have been requested in the contract, but how were they realised in practice? Much of the decoration imitated existing stalls in Venice, but this cannot completely explain their artistic and iconographic aspects. The San Zaccaria choir displays a unique design and employment of geometric intarsia decoration, but exhibits similarities to other contemporary stalls, especially in sister Benedictine convents.

The stalls are a combination of intarsia and carved decoration, painted and natural woods, and Gothic and Renaissance ornament. Small lozenges of intarsia *a toppo* appear on the seat-backs and at only 360mm in height, the seats are particularly low, not unsurprising for a female convent.<sup>78</sup> The quadrants are semi-circular cut-outs while the stall dividers display densely carved floral and foliate motifs. Providing visual focus, the stall-backs are decorated with geometric intarsia *a toppo* designs beneath trefoil-cusped pointed arches with stylised carved flowers in the spandrels. Panels are surrounded by *a toppo* borders, while above an intarsia frieze depicting chairs in perspective has mostly been replaced by painted imitation.

Beneath the canopy a carved frieze of trefoil-cusped pointed arches on a blue background

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<sup>77</sup>Contract dated 26 June 1478, transcribed in Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 93, Document 31: ‘a far nel chanto sedia e non spezado chome he quello da S. Zuanne pollo’.

<sup>78</sup>The average height of seats in choirs I have measured is 410mm.

also continues around the stall-dividers. The shell canopies were carved from single pieces of conifer and are painted in blue and gold replicating an earlier colour scheme.<sup>79</sup> Framing the canopies, semi-circular intarsia friezes feature imitation colonettes directly above the stall-dividers. Carved and painted putti appear in the spandrels, while above the canopies a carved frieze of vegetal and foliate motifs is flanked by two intarsia strips.

The abbess's stall was attributed hierarchical importance by the substitution of geometric patterns on the stall-back with two perspectival intarsia *a toppo* panels, surrounded by elaborate *a toppo* borders (Fig. 187). The lower panel is a simple font design, which has been accurately restored based on comparable panels in later Cozzi choirs in the Frari in Venice and Spilimbergo.<sup>80</sup> No such pairing could be found for the badly damaged upper panel, which appears to represent an exterior courtyard flanked by two crenellated buildings. The use of perspectival panels ranks the abbess's stall superior to the rest of the choir, as they were more complicated and expensive to produce. This distinction was not stipulated in the highly detailed contract for the San Zaccaria stalls, but must have been discussed informally between the craftsmen and the nuns. The abbess's stall underwent further changes in a later period, involving raising the whole seat on a step and inserting a carved frieze of conifer wood between the stall-back and canopy (Fig. 188).<sup>81</sup>

The stalls were restored in 1997–2000, and the official reports describe the construction of the furniture and remaining original elements.<sup>82</sup> Prior to the recent restoration, the stalls were restored in 1960, although no official reports survive.<sup>83</sup> The latest report has ascertained that the stalls were constructed from walnut, except the conifer canopies, the uppermost horizontal frieze of larch and the hidden framework of the seats, also in larch.<sup>84</sup> This framework consists of vertical posts ('montante') which correspond to the divisions

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<sup>79</sup>Roberto Bergamaschi and Giovanna Menegazzi, 'Restauro del coro ligneo di San Zaccaria- Relazione tecnica (Archivio fotografico e dei restauri del Soprintendenza speciale per il patrimonio storico, artistico ed entoantropologico e per il polo museale della città di Venezia e dei comuni della Gronda lagunare, album 380)', 2000 (hereafter referred to as Bergamaschi and Menegazzi, 2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 47.

<sup>80</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 52.

<sup>81</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 43.

<sup>82</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>83</sup>This restoration, which was cited by Bergamaschi in his restoration document, was reported in *Il Gazzettino* on 27 September 1960: 'Sono stati elogiati gli artigiani Giacomo Lorenzini e Giovanni Busetto, materiali restauratori degli stalli del coro, che risalgono al 1453 (sic), intagliati e intarsiati da Franco a Marco Cozzi.' Reported in 'Illustrati al pubblico i restauri nella chiesa di San Zaccaria', *Il Gazzettino* (27th September 1960).

<sup>84</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), pp. 25, 29–33.

between stalls, and a horizontal beam to which the swing-seats are actually attached.<sup>85</sup> The whole structure rests on piles of bricks which shield the wood from the potentially damp stone floor, an innovation Bergamaschi claims was unique to Venetian choirs.<sup>86</sup>

The individual components of the stalls were attached to this basic framework in a precise order: first the horizontal moulding to which the seat would be hinged; then the seat-back; the stall standards (including the quadrant and colonette); then the undulating seat-capping which was attached in sections encompassing several stalls at a time. The stall-back would then be added, along with the friezes which link it to the canopy; then the stall-dividers or *erte* were attached to the underside of the horizontal base of the canopies, which again could encompass several stalls. Finally, the canopies (excavated from single pieces of conifer) were mounted, together with their framing arches, spandrels containing carved angels and larch frieze. The apex of the stalls was sealed with horizontal planks dating from different periods.<sup>87</sup> Bergamaschi's report concluded that most of the decoration we can see today is original in design if not always in execution.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the geometric designs of the stall-backs are original, but a significant proportion of the intarsia *a toppo* itself dates to the 1960 or 2000 restoration.<sup>89</sup> Woods used for the abbess's stall-back included oak, maple, walnut, mulberry, spindlewood, ash and yew.<sup>90</sup>

The San Zaccaria stalls were not designed in isolation, but show similarities to contemporary stalls in northern Italy. The contract requested canopies called *felze* which might have resembled the coverings on gondole. Similar simple canopies were also employed for two dignitaries' stalls in San Francesco in Brescia, formed of crossed vaults painted in blue with gold stars (Fig. 189b). It is likely that the originally proposed San Zaccaria canopies resembled the Brescian versions, but in execution were changed to shell niches. In their final design, the canopies at San Zaccaria are closer in form to those of the mid-fifteenth century stalls in Reggio Emilia Cathedral. In the Venetian choir, however, a sense of flatness and horizontality was maintained through the addition of friezes above the canopies

<sup>85</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 33.

<sup>86</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 25.

<sup>87</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 31.

<sup>88</sup>For instance the painting of the canopies in blue and gold probably dates to the 1595 renovation, but would have reflected the original colour scheme. A similar conclusion was reached about the painted angels in the canopy spandrels. Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), pp. 47–49.

<sup>89</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 39.

<sup>90</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), appendix 3.

which contrast with Reggio's Gothic-style gables and pinnacles.

Clelia Alberici has compared the uppermost frieze of the San Zaccaria stalls to a carved sacristy cupboard in Treviso Cathedral, dated to the end of the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth.<sup>91</sup> The sacristy cupboard doors are framed by friezes of interlacing blind Gothic arches, similar to those above the stall-backs in San Zaccaria. This part of the stall decoration was contracted to imitate friezes in the Santi Giovanni e Paolo choir, but the Treviso example shows that this motif was widespread in wooden church furniture across the Veneto.

### 5.3.1 Geometric stall-backs

The most striking feature of the stalls are the geometric knot designs on the stall-backs. Beneath trefoil-cusped Gothic arches, a variety of intarsia designs incorporate stars, crosses, lozenges and other mathematical forms. Patterns were created from strips of intarsia *a toppo* inserted into a plain walnut matrix. Designs comprise centralised images with additional sections in the upper fields which fill the entire rectangular space. For example, stall-back E14 contains a centralised design of interlocking stars, from which a strip projects upwards, creating an unbalanced effect.

Some panels display simple religious iconography, such as stall W10 which shows a formation of three crosses, and stall W13 which displays a single cross, suggestive of celtic knot designs (Fig. 190a). Stall E10 shows the monogram 'IHS' above a design of intersecting pentagons and stars, which although it seems incongruous, was not the result of a later intervention. (Fig. 190b). A similar monogram symbol appears on a font in the courtyard of Sant'Antonio in Polesine, a Benedictine convent in Ferrara (Fig. 191), showing that it was a common symbol in Benedictine female convents. Most of the panels in the San Zaccaria choir, however, do not have direct symbolic meaning but instead display non-figurative geometric patterning.

Abstract patterns were common in contemporary intarsia stalls, although few appeared on the main stall-backs. Usually, geometric panels formed seat-backs or decoration on lower stalls, as for example in the Canozzi stalls in Modena Cathedral, dated to the early 1460s.

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<sup>91</sup> Alberici (1980), p. 13. L. Bailo, 'Un armadio gotico nella sagrestia del Duomo di Treviso', *Arte italiana decorativa e industriale* 4, no. 1 (January 1895), p. 7.

However, stall-backs in San Francesco in Brescia display geometric patterns of intarsia *a toppo* incorporating mother-of-pearl to create luxurious decorative surfaces (Fig. 189a). Patterns based on lozenges, squares and crosses often form grid designs and although the designs are not identical to those at San Zaccaria, the aesthetic is strikingly similar.

The use of decorative geometric patterns at San Zaccaria and San Francesco in Brescia continued an older furniture tradition. Medieval wood and stone furniture employed abstract devices for decorative effects, most obviously seen in Roman ‘Cosmati’ work. For example, a twelfth-century stone throne in the Roman church of Santa Balbina exhibits geometric mosaic decoration comprising squares and circles (Fig. 192a).<sup>92</sup> Morley noted that the flat, geometric forms and simple interlacing of the ‘Cosmati’ style could have easily been translated into wooden intarsia decoration.<sup>93</sup> In Venice itself, the so-called ‘Throne of St Peter’ in San Pietro in Castello, dated to the eleventh or twelfth century, is composed of reused stone panels displaying Islamic geometric motifs and a meandering cufic inscription (Fig. 192b).<sup>94</sup> Possibly originating from a floor tomb, throne or minbar, the Islamic patterns were evidently considered suitable decoration for the bishop’s throne.

Few examples of Italian wooden furniture survive from before the Trecento, but extant Dalmatian furniture can give us an insight into the forms and motifs used in this early period. Complex patternwork appears on choir benches in Split Cathedral, dated to the late twelfth century (Fig. 193).<sup>95</sup> Seven strips of carving on the backs of the Split benches combine figural and abstract decoration. The lowest band comprises intertwining knot designs of circles and lozenges, similar to later intarsia patterns at San Zaccaria.

The complex geometric forms on the San Zaccaria stall-backs seem to exhibit an Islamic aesthetic. Deborah Howard has emphasised the close links between Venice and the eastern world, especially in the decorative arts, and the recent ‘Venezia e l’Islam’ exhibition reiterated these cultural ties.<sup>96</sup> It is likely that furniture and intarsia panels were imported

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<sup>92</sup>John Morley, *Furniture. The Western Tradition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), p. 64, fig. 107.

<sup>93</sup>Morley (1999), p. 64.

<sup>94</sup>*Venezia e l’Islam 828–1797* (exhibition catalogue, Venice, Palazzo Ducale 28 July–25 November 2007), ed. Stefano Carboni (Venice: Marsilio, 2007) (hereafter referred to as *Venezia e l’Islam 828–1797* [2007]), p. 340, cat. 69.

<sup>95</sup>Janez Höfler, *Die Kunst Dalmatiens vom Mittelalter bis zur Renaissance (800–1520)* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1989), p. 109.

<sup>96</sup>Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East. The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100–1500* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 163. See also *Venezia e l’Islam 828–1797* (2007).

from the Islamic world into Venice, providing a direct source of inspiration for the San Zaccaria inlaid stall-backs.

Islamic tooled and pierced bookbindings were a further portable and easily accessible source of eastern geometric patterns. Particularly close visual parallels can be made with mid fifteenth-century Ottoman bookbindings, before stylistic changes in the 1460s developed more elaborate filigree designs.<sup>97</sup> The back cover and flap of an almanac dated 1452–53 display centralised designs based on ten-pointed stars (Fig. 194), strikingly similar to stall-back E14 in San Zaccaria, one of the most eastern inspired panels in the choir (Fig. 195).<sup>98</sup> In the 1474 *St Mark triptych* by Bartolomeo Vivarini in the Corner chapel in the Frari, an unidentified apostle on the right panel holds a book with a leather tooled binding decorated with such geometric patterning.<sup>99</sup> As most of the stall-backs in San Zaccaria comprise centralised forms which inelegantly project into the upper fields of the panels, the Cozzi could have been influenced by centralised designs seen on Islamic bookbindings. If designs were copied from patterns on bookbindings or tapestries, it would explain the somewhat awkward addition of the extra decoration.

Centralised designs also featured on eastern carpets and tapestries, which contemporary paintings show were present in Venice. In *Procession in Piazza San Marco* by Gentile Bellini, spectators watch the miraculous events from a loggia on the left, leaning on carpets decorated with complex patterns of stars, squares and octagons.<sup>100</sup> In another painting for the same location—the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista—Giovanni Mansueti's *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio*, carpets are draped over windows, one of which shows intersecting stars within a hexagon.<sup>101</sup>

As we shall see, textiles were used to decorate the choir of San Zaccaria during important liturgical events, bringing this artistic relationship into focus. When the patriarch came to visit San Zaccaria, a ground cloth or carpet ('suolo') was placed on the floor from the

<sup>97</sup>The new style was particularly associated with the reign of Sultan Mehmed II. Julian Raby and Zeren Tanindi, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century*, ed. by Tim Stanley (London: Azimuth Editions, 1993), p. 45.

<sup>98</sup>Almanac produced for Sultan Mehmed II in 1452–3. Levant-grain leather of dark red-brown colour, lined with paper. Raby and Tanindi (1993), p. 126, cat. 5.

<sup>99</sup>For the image, see Humfrey (1993), p. 172, fig. 160.

<sup>100</sup>The painting is dated 1496. Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 286.

<sup>101</sup>The painting is dated 1494. Brown (1988), p. 285. Illustration on p. 159, plate XXI.

western side of the choir up to a temporary altar.<sup>102</sup> This visual effect could have been similar to a scene of the Annunciation on the contro-façade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, frescoed by Pietro di Miniato in the 1390s (Fig. 196).<sup>103</sup> On the ground before the Virgin a narrow carpet is decorated with geometric knot designs in the form of crosses, suggesting that such textiles might have been used in the medieval Italian church interior. Miniato's painting forms part of an iconographic tradition situating the Virgin in an interior rich in oriental textiles and intarsia furniture, further cementing the link between the two media.<sup>104</sup> It is tantalising to consider whether the carpets and choir stalls in San Zaccaria displayed comparable geometric patterns, creating a striking visual symbiosis.

Moreover, north-Italian woodworkers depicted Islamic carpets in intarsia choir stall panels, further showing the artistic interchange between the two techniques. In the 1490s choir of Sant'Anastasia in Verona, panel N11 depicts a vase of lilies standing on an elaborately woven carpet, decorated with geometric patterns (Fig. 197a). At Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, an intarsia panel portrayed a Dominican saint framed within a niche, draped with an exotic carpet displaying a complex geometric design (Fig. 197b).

In addition to these generic Islamic design sources, the geometric decoration in San Zaccaria could have had a special significance for Benedictine nuns. Similar interlacing geometric forms were used in the late fourteenth-century choir in the Tempietto Longobardo in Cividale and the early sixteenth-century choir from the nuns' church of San Paolo now in Santa Trinità in Parma. At Cividale, the stall-backs form a continuous panel, featuring blind arcading and decorative roundels, some of which contain interlacing geometric designs (Fig. 198a). The choir from San Paolo in Parma displays perspective intarsia panels on the stall-backs but intricate geometric patterns on the substall seat-backs, displaying more creative ingenuity than comparable work of this date (Fig. 198b). Although separated by distance and chronology, the use of geometric forms in the Benedictine nuns' choirs of Cividale, Venice and Parma is striking and warrants explanation.

<sup>102</sup>Ceremoniale, fol.7v–8r: 'Allora e se fa conzar et aparechiar la giexia et lievase via i cancelli del choro solamente dalo ladi de madonna l'abbadessa e li se fa un suolo ch comenza ale sedie dela dita madonna l'abadessa e va dal altra banda fina ai cancelli de madonna la priora el qual suolo se fa largo circha passa do sopra qual suolo se fa un altar'.

<sup>103</sup>Giovanni Leoncini, 'La pittura del Trecento a Santa Maria Novella', in *Alla riscoperta delle chiese di Firenze: 2. Santa Maria Novella*, ed. by Timothy Verdon (Florence: Centro Di, 2003), p. 95. Marco Spallanzani, *Oriental Rugs in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 2007), fig. 19.

<sup>104</sup>This tradition began with an Annunciation in the Santissima Annunziata dated to the mid-fourteenth century, which became a model for Florentine depictions of the subject. Spallanzani (2007), p. 58.

Further evidence of this preference for intarsia patterns amongst Benedictine nuns is illustrated by the choir of Sant'Uldarico in Parma. The abbess Cabrina Carissimi along with six nuns commissioned choir stalls to the woodworker Giangiacomo Baruffi in 1505, citing the choir of San Francesco al Prato in Parma as a model.<sup>105</sup> However, the woodworker was told not to copy the perspective panels of the Franciscan choir: 'except the perspectives; in the place of which he must make knots (*'grupi'*) of intarsia, varied and different with good and perfect designs, such that they can fill the places where the perspectives should be placed'.<sup>106</sup> Here the nuns' appreciation for patterns was made explicit. The designs were even described using the same term—*'grupi'* or *'groppi'*—as in the San Zaccaria contract. The Sant'Uldarico document also exhibits more general comparisons with the San Zaccaria contract. In Parma, a large group of nuns were present for the drawing up of the contract, which contained several detailed clauses related to a nearby male religious house.<sup>107</sup>

The stalls in Sant'Uldarico, despite being completed around half a century after those in San Zaccaria, bear some striking comparisons to the Venetian furniture. The *'groppi'* or knot patterns dominate the stall-backs and comprise geometric and linear designs both in simple inlay and strips of *a toppo* (Fig. 199). The panel of stall S2 even features a similar design to stall E14 in San Zaccaria, of interlacing strips creating a star shape. As in San Zaccaria, the abbess's stall in Sant'Uldarico was differentiated by the addition of a large perspective intarsia panel representing palazzi by a riverbank, and a carving of a female head on the hand-rest (Fig. 200). The nuns in Parma specifically requested that a perspective panel distinguish the abbess's stall, and that the other three terminal stalls display Abbess Carissimi's coat-of-arms (Fig. 201).<sup>108</sup> The Sant'Uldarico choir reveals

<sup>105</sup> Archivio di Stato Parma, Notai di Parma, filza 687, 4 April 1505. The contract is partially transcribed in Ronchini (1876), p. 314. On the choir, see Marco Pellegrini, 'Il coro delle monache di Sant'Uldarico', in *Frammenti fugaci di un passato in Parma e provincia*, ed. by Marco Pellegrini (Parma: Rotaract Club Parma Est, 1999) and Giuliano Colla, 'La chiesa di Sant'Uldarico ed il suo splendido chiostro', *Bella Parma: trimestrale di arte, storia, letteratura e costume*, no. 5 (2004), p. 13.

<sup>106</sup> ASPr, Notai di Parma, filza 687, 4 April 1505, fol. 2r: 'excepto che le prospective; in loco de le quali elo debbia fare grupi de tarsie varii et diversi cum boni et perfecti dissigni, tali che empiano il loco dove andariano le prospective'.

<sup>107</sup> In total seven nuns were present, including Abbess Cabrina Carrissimi, who financed the project. The choir of San Francesco al Prato in Parma was referred to five times in the contract and had been constructed in 1488 by Tommaso Sacca. Pellegrini (1999), p. 165. For the church, see Manuela Catarsi Dall'Aglio, 'La Chiesa di San Francesco del Prato a Parma', in *Scavi medievali in Italia 1996–1999. Atti della seconda conferenza italiana di archeologia medievale, Cassino, 16–18 Dicembre 1999*, ed. by Stella Patitucci Uggeri (Rome: Herder, 2001).

<sup>108</sup> ASPr, Notai di Parma, filza 687, 4 April 1505, fol. 2v: 'Item che il dicto magistro sia obligato a fare una bela et bona prospectiva convenientemente granda in lo stalo de la abatesa et atuti tri quatri li cantoni del core larma dela abatesa cum il fuste de conveniente grandecia. Como li potera capere.'



both that the San Zaccaria nuns were not unique in drafting a highly detailed contract, and that abstract geometric patterns were particularly favoured by certain Benedictine convents.

However, Benedictine nuns did not exclusively prefer patterns to figurative images. Panels in Santa Trinità and the abbesses' stalls in San Zaccaria and Sant'Uldarico display perspective scenes, showing that this iconography was indeed admired and valued. The example of Sant'Uldarico and the presence of geometric patterns in Cividale and Venice, however, does suggest a general preference for abstract decoration, but the poor survival rate of Benedictine nuns' choirs significantly limits the testing of this theory. However, perhaps a consideration of one of the most popular female pastimes of the period—needlework—can shed some light on this curious correlation.

Lowe has shown that nuns' needlework was an 'almost lost category of artistic expression', practised in the majority convents of most religious orders.<sup>109</sup> No textile art from San Zaccaria survives, but it is likely that the nuns were engaged in this practical and sometimes noble pursuit.<sup>110</sup> As for the designs and motifs which featured in the embroidery, a later Venetian publication can provide some insights. In 1531 Giovanni Antonio Tagliente published a book instructing ladies how to sew and embroider complex designs of leaves, flowers and geometric strapwork.<sup>111</sup> Tagliente's book was illustrated with his own designs, some of which show interlacing knots forming crosses and stars, revealing the same artistic intention as the designs in San Zaccaria (Fig. 202).

Although Tagliente's book was published after the stalls were made, it is an indicative source of textile theory of the period. The link between the choir panels and textile patterns was not just visual but terminological. In the choir contract, the geometric patterns were referred to as *groppi*, while Tagliente described the application in textiles of 'groppi moreschi et arabeschi'.<sup>112</sup> In the San Zaccaria panels, the appearance of the monogram of Christ on one of the stalls seems out of place amongst such abstract patterns.

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<sup>109</sup>K. J. P. Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 321–22.

<sup>110</sup>The production of gold thread, which was certainly practised at the Venetian convent of Le Vergini, had noble overtones. Lowe (2003), p. 324.

<sup>111</sup>Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, *Esemplario nuovo che insegna ale Donne a cuscire, a reccamare, et a disegnare a ciascuno. Et anchora e di grande utilita ad ogni Artista, per esser il disegno a ogniuno necessario (first printed 1531)* (Venice: F. Ongania editore, 1879).

<sup>112</sup>Tagliente (1879), fol. 2r.

However, a similar christogram formed part of Tagliente's collection of *esempi*, showing that it was closely associated with textile design (Fig. 203).<sup>113</sup> This provides a context for the somewhat incongruent appearance of the monogram in the stalls, and reinforces the link between the intarsia and textile designs.

## 5.4 The liturgical context of the choir

The San Zaccaria stalls were not just intended as visually exciting objects, but as functional seating to be used by the nuns on an everyday basis. A fifteenth-century ceremonial book from San Zaccaria preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Venice has been partially transcribed by Quaranta and used by Radke, Lowe and Primhak to give insights into the procedures and liturgy used by the nuns.<sup>114</sup> Setting out the procedures for the funeral of the abbess, the election and investiture of the new abbess and the nuns' consecration ceremony, the document can also give valuable clues about the placement and use of the choir. In the text, the nuns send to Castello for the patriarch, suggesting that the document is dated after the creation of the new Venetian Patriarchate in 1457.<sup>115</sup> Although the document is not precisely dated, the nuns' choir was probably in the same location throughout the fifteenth century despite the acquisition of new stalls. The fifteenth-century contract did not indicate that the new stalls were to be placed in a different location.

The ceremonial text is largely concerned with the death of an abbess and investiture of a new head of the convent. When the nuns entered the church for the funeral of the abbess, with the Augustinian friars from Santo Stefano who were officiating at the ceremony, they passed straight from the main door into the choir.<sup>116</sup> The body was placed under the baldachin lent by the Scuola di San Marco, which was in the centre of the choir. There

<sup>113</sup>The 'IHS' monogram also appeared on an altar frontal embroidered by the nuns of Le Murate in Florence for the *pieve* of San Gimignano in 1449. Lowe (2003), p. 323.

<sup>114</sup>The book is in ASV, San Zaccaria, busta 5, Ceremoniale (cited as Ceremoniale). See Elena Quaranta, *Oltre San Marco. Organizzazione e prassi della musica nelle chiese di Venezia nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1998), Primhak (1991), Kate Lowe, 'Elections of Abbesses and Notions of Identity in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy, with Special Reference to Venice', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2001) and Radke (2001).

<sup>115</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 6r: 'madonna la priora e le done manda a Castello da Monsignor el Patriarcha'. In 1457 following the death of Domenico Michel, Patriarch of Grado, Pope Nicholas V created the new Patriarchate of Venice with the bull 'Regis aeterni'. Umberto Benigni, 'Venice', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 15 (1912), Retrieved 11 August 2009 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15333a.htm>.

<sup>116</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 2v: 'Poi el corpo vien portado in giexia...E le done segue. A presso el se tuol a imprestado de la scuola de San Marcho el suo baldechin el qual se fa levar per le nostre maistranze a mezo del choro.'

was no mention of any obstacle between the main door and the centre of the choir, so we can only assume that any screens that were present had doors or openings to allow the procession to pass through. Bergamaschi's argument, which will be described in more detail below, that the choir did not have an opening on the west side, makes it difficult to imagine the logistics of the funeral liturgy. In the choir, to either side of the baldachin, two candle holders with candles of varying sizes were placed on the *prospere*, or desks, before the choir stalls.<sup>117</sup> After the mass, the bishop and the funeral party went into the nuns' parlatorio, and after the burial of the abbess in her tomb, the nuns went back into the church to read psalms.

The second part of the ceremonial described the election of the new abbess. After the election in the chapter house, the nuns filed into the church two by two. They came into the church singing and all knelt before the grille in the choir, in front of the sacrament.<sup>118</sup> If they had a close view of the sacrament on the high altar from the grille in the choir, it must have been at the east end of the choir, next to the *cappella maggiore*. The nuns then went to the other side of the choir—behind the choir—where the windows looked into the church.<sup>119</sup> As has already been discussed, the word 'windows' can be interpreted as the openings between the columns of the choir screen. In the area behind the church benches with tapestries had been prepared for the nuns' relatives and various noblemen who came close to the windows to hear the abbess.<sup>120</sup> The ceremonial reveals that different parts of the church were reserved for diverse social groups. However, the nuns in the choir seem to be the centre of activity, having on the east side the grille and the high altar and on the west the screen and the place for the laity.

After the patriarch had been contacted regarding the election of the new abbess, he came to San Zaccaria with his chaplains and prelates to say mass at the church and officially invest the new abbess.<sup>121</sup> For this important ceremony a temporary altar was set up at

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<sup>117</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 2v: 'Poi atraverso del choro da una prospera al'altra se mete do stange ale qual se apoza dopieri .xxv. de lire .iiii. lun .xiii. davanti. e xii. da drio.'

<sup>118</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 7r: 'Madonna l'abadessa con madonna la priora vien avati e tute laltre driedo a ordene e chusi cantando le sene vien in giexia inzenochiase in choro apresso la ferriada de capella davanti el sacramento.'

<sup>119</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 7r: 'Poi madonna l'abadessa con madonna la priora sene vien con tute le done driedo el choro dove ele fenestre che uarda in giexia'.

<sup>120</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 7r: 'el qual luogo e tuto comado con bancali in torno con un suollo portizo piu alto fornido de tapedi e chusi tuto per terra'. 'E quando vien zentilomeni la se lieua suxo e va verso le fenestre e poi torna a sentar ch la sta tuto quel zorno e chusi eciam ogni di fina tanto di la vien sentada.'

<sup>121</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 7v.

the east end of the choir raised on a step in contact with the grille all along the length of the altar, with seats for the patriarch and his vicar placed to either side.<sup>122</sup> The altar was decorated with silver, reliquaries, candles and tapestries and the two seats were decorated with gold cloths.<sup>123</sup>

A temporary floor or ground cloth ('suolo'), two *passi* wide, was placed on the floor from the western side of the choir up to the temporary altar.<sup>124</sup> In a confusing passage, it seems that the gates were taken away from the 'side of the abbess' and that the flooring was placed between the seat (or seats) of the abbess and the gates of the prioress. It is not clear whether the ceremonial text referred to the actual seats of the abbess and prioress or to their respective ranges of the choir. It does show, however, that the choir was divided into two sides. This arrangement is also revealed by the terminology used for the seating of the prelates, who were put in the 'choir of the prioress' or the 'side of the prioress' showing that the choir was divided into two separate ranges, distinguished by the seats of the abbess and prioress.<sup>125</sup> The prioress' side was decorated with gold cloths and other tapestries<sup>126</sup> and half of the floor in the choir was covered with carpets because later in the ceremony the nuns would kneel in this area.<sup>127</sup>

On the day of the investiture, when the abbess and prioress accompanied the patriarch in a procession, the abbess was on his right and the prioress on his left. This order probably reflected the positions of their seats in the choir, with the abbess's seat on the right or south range facing the altar.<sup>128</sup> The patriarch entered the choir as far as the temporary

<sup>122</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 7v: 'se fa un altar con el suo scalin davanti cha fa un altro grado el qual altar toccha la ferrada, longo tanto quanto è laltar de capella.'

<sup>123</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 8r: 'el qual altar vien ornado con arzenti e reliquie e candeloti e candele et eciam el suolo e pato de l'altar vien ornado con tapezarie suxo el qual pato e suolo apresso l'altar se metedo sedie ornate con panni doro una per ladi del dito altar'.

<sup>124</sup>Ceremoniale, ff. 7v–8r: 'Allora e se fa conzar et aparechiar la giexia et lievase via i cancelli del choro solamente dalo ladi de madonna l'abbadessa e li se fa un suolo che comenza ale sedie dela dita madonna l'abadessa e va dal altra banda fina ai cancelli de madonna la priora el qual suolo se fa largo circha passa do sopra qual suolo se fa un altar'.

<sup>125</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 8r: 'Nel qual choro dela priora se mete li prelati che vien invidadi a honorar la festa'. Ceremoniale, fol. 9r: 'tuti li prelati et altri vano a seder dala banda del choro dela priora secondo i gradi lor'.

<sup>126</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 8r: 'Eciam se conza el choro et la sedia de l'abadessa e chusi de la banda de la priora con panni d'oro et altre tapezarie.'

<sup>127</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 8r: 'conzase eciam per terra con tapedi quasi fina a mezo el choro, per che li sta tute le moneghe inzonechiade driedo madonna l'abadessa da poi che la è vegnuda in choro con el patriarcha.'

<sup>128</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 9r: 'monsignor sta al mezo madonna l'abadessa dal dadi destro e madonna la priora dalladi senestro'. The position of the abbess's seat to the right of the entrance to the choir corresponds with the most prominent stall in the Franciscan choir of S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice and in the Benedictine choir of Santa Guistina in Padua.

altar, while the abbess, prioress and the other nuns knelt in front of him.<sup>129</sup> Since they had to process up to the temporary altar, this also indicates that the entrance to the choir was at the west end.

The symbolic importance of the abbess's seat is shown in the next part of the investiture ceremony. After presenting her with an open missal and a ring, the patriarch formally invested the abbess into her role by placing her hands on the altar and then leading her to her seat in the choir. The patriarch said to the abbess: 'I bestow you your stall in the choir' before investing her with the authority to speak in the chapter and giving her the keys to the monastery.<sup>130</sup> The ceremony becomes more potent considering the visual aspect of the abbess's stall. Radically different from the standard stalls, the abbess's stall features two perspective scenes surrounded by rich patterning. The importance placed on the abbess's stall in the investiture ceremony could have been instrumental in its highly decorative and sophisticated design.

After processing to the chapter house, the patriarch and his vicar returned to the church, assuming their seats at the temporary altar, while the nuns followed and knelt before the altar. The abbess then processed to her stall, while the patriarch and vicar sat in the seats next to her during the singing of the *Te Deum*.<sup>131</sup> The prelates then came to touch the hand of the abbess, followed by the nuns who knelt in front of her in turn and gave her the kiss of peace.<sup>132</sup> The ceremonial text did not clarify the exact position of the abbess's stall in the choir, although the nuns could have approached her easier if her seat was next to an opening. Then the abbess left her seat and knelt before the patriarch, surrounded by the prioress and other nuns.<sup>133</sup> The whole company then left the church, entered the cloister and congregated in the abbess's apartment to enjoy some refreshments.

The last part of the fifteenth-century ceremonial described the 'sagra': the benediction

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<sup>129</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 9r: 'E madonna l'abadessa romane inzonechiada con madonna la priora davanti el patriarcha e chusi tute le altre done a ordene'.

<sup>130</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 9v: 'Poi chusi per la man la mena ala sedia de l'abadessa in choro e metela a sentar dicendo Io ne dona stallo in choro.'

<sup>131</sup>Ceremoniale, ff. 10r–v: 'madonna l'abadessa se lieva et va a sentar ne la sedia sua in choro acompagnada con monsignor el patriarcha e con el vicario i qual se mete a seder ne le sedie apresso madonna l'abadessa fina che se compie *Te Deum*'.

<sup>132</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 10v: 'tuti i prelati vano a tochar la man a madonna l'abadessa. Poi madonna la priora se lieva su e inzenochiase davanti l'abadessa a dali osculum pacis et chusi fa tute le munege de grado in grado'.

<sup>133</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 10v: 'Da poi madonna labadessa vien fora dela sua sedia e inzenochiase davanti el patriarcha e chusi etiam madonna la priora e tute laltre done atorno'.

or consecration of nuns. This ceremony involved a use of the choir unlike the other ceremonies, indicating that the sacred space could be used in diverse ways. For this ceremony, the seats and *prospere* from the side of the abbess were removed in order to create more room.<sup>134</sup> If this decree was ever put into practice (the ceremonial was not a description of events but advice as to how events *should* happen) it shows that the San Zaccaria choir stalls were made to be removable, an added convenience unavailable for other stalls. If the abbess's range was on the south, this would have created a large space encompassing the central and right nave aisles. Another difference from this ceremony is that the relatives of the nuns were in the chapel, rather than in the nave behind the choir.<sup>135</sup> Providing context for the ceremonies at San Zaccaria, Lowe pointed out that the convent church of Le Vergini in the fifteenth century was not 'a private or closed space', but one in which visitors had access.<sup>136</sup> The nuns who were to be consecrated together with the same number of chaplains came into the choir and stood before the grille of the chapel 'in the round in the form of a corona'.<sup>137</sup>

A further ceremonial manuscript from San Zaccaria, dated to 1505, is preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.<sup>138</sup> In the early sixteenth century, the old choir of San Zaccaria would have still been used for such ceremonies, as the chapel of Sant'Atanasio was only created in 1595. The manuscript explained procedures for investing young women as nuns in the convent, and is similar to the process in the fifteenth-century ceremonial described above. The virgins 'got up and went two by two up to the middle of the choir and behind this place prepared themselves in the form of a corona and there they revered the high altar'.<sup>139</sup> By this we can interpret that the young women stood in a semi-circle before the grille of the *cappella maggiore*. Intriguingly, a medieval Cosmatesque pavement

<sup>134</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 14v: 'Per el qual aparechio el se tuol via le sedie de choro dala banda de madonna l'abadessa e chusi tute le prospere che son da quel ladi azo che le non ochupa la festa.'

<sup>135</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 14v: 'I parenti dele dite done stano in capella ale ferriade a veder la dita festa ala porta de la qual chapella.'

<sup>136</sup>Lowe (2001), p. 416.

<sup>137</sup>Ceremoniale, fol. 14r: 'Ulterius el se aparechia in el nostro choro al tondo in modo de una chorona davanti la ferriade de capella tanti chapitelli quante son le done che se die sagrar, per che soto quelli sta le dite done sì el dì dela profession chome el dì dela sagra.'

<sup>138</sup>Biblioteca Marciana di Venezia, 2172 (=LAT. III, 74). This manuscript was also cited in Radke (2001), p. 451. The manuscript consists of three ceremonials, the first two dating to 1437. The date of 12 April 1505 for the last part is given on fol. 34v.

<sup>139</sup>BMV, 2172 (=LAT.III.74), fol. 29r: 'Virgines bine et bine surgant et vadant usque ad medium chori post loca in modo corone eis preparata et ibi salutant altare maxima cum reverentia et sic omnes virgines sequentes faciant.'

in the nave of the old church resembles a large circle with radiating spokes (Fig. 204). When the stalls were positioned in the nave, the pavement would have appeared between the two ranges, suggesting that the young women stood around the pavement to form the corona before the high altar.

A further liturgical event in the old church of San Zaccaria was the visit of Emperor Frederick III to Venice in 1469, only five years after the completion of the choir stalls. Descriptions survive in two copies, in the Biblioteca Museo Correr and in the Biblioteca Marciana, and show a further use of the liturgical spaces in the church.<sup>140</sup> The event must have taken place in the newly restored Gothic church, since the new church was still some decades away from completion.

The Emperor visited the church to hear the nuns sing psalms and laude followed by a meal in the parlatorio. On this occasion the Emperor was seated in the *cappella maggiore* and the abbess and the nuns came up to the grille to kneel and sing before him.<sup>141</sup> The Emperor's ambassadors and other noble men were in the parlatorio and the part of the church behind the choir where the meal was prepared.<sup>142</sup> The Emperor was so impressed with the service that he asked if he could come back for a mass the following Thursday.<sup>143</sup> This time, the narrator of the ceremony described the seat prepared for the Emperor: 'having prepared the chapel as worthily as it could possibly be, the seat for the Emperor was all covered with gold cloth and in the same way the stool (*sgabello*) was covered with gold cloth'.<sup>144</sup> His seat, which the text implies was a temporary addition, was placed 'next to the grille by the side at the place of the abbess'.<sup>145</sup>

As opposed to Radke, who proposed that the Emperor was seated immediately next to the abbess at the west end of the choir, I interpret the phrase 'the place of the abbess' in the context of the other liturgical writings from San Zaccaria regarding the 'band of the

<sup>140</sup>BCV, Codice Cicogna, 2418 and BMV, 7898 (=IT. VII. 707). This document was also cited by Radke in Radke (2001), p. 451.

<sup>141</sup>BCV, Cod. Cic. 2418, fol. 669v: 'C'e cosi ingenochiate tutte le done a ferra li fo cantati alcuni Salmi et Laude'.

<sup>142</sup>BCV, Cod. Cic. 2418, fol. 669v: 'il vene il Conte di Goritia, con molti Cavti (cavalieri), et con una bella compaga delo parlatorio nostro, et chiesa di dietro il coro, over era aparechiata una colacione all'improvviso'.

<sup>143</sup>It is slightly confusing as to which day he came back; in the text he asked to come back on the Saturday, but it later described him coming on the Thursday.

<sup>144</sup>BCV, Cod. Cic. 2418, fol. 669v: 'essendo preparata la capella tanto degnamisse quante diu si piu mai, et fa sedia per il Imperatore tutta egsenta di panni d'oro, et similmente il scabello ornato tutto di pani d'oro'.

<sup>145</sup>BMV, 7898 (=IT. VII. 707), p. 172: 'Et gionta, che fu la sua sacra maesta in capella, il venne a sentar over era sta apparecchiata la sua sedia appresso la ferriata a lato al luogo dell'abbadessa.'

abbess' or the 'side of the abbess'. The narrator of the description simply stated that the Emperor was seated on the same side of the church—namely the south—as the abbess's stall in the choir, which was probably at the west end of the range. However, perhaps for this unique occasion when a temporary altar was erected, normal seating positions were altered. The Emperor would have wished to sit near the abbess, who could have relinquished her normal seat for this special occasion.

Unfortunately we do not have fifteenth-century texts describing one of the most important events in the life of the convent: the annual visit of the Doge at Easter. Various disputes which arose after 1519, when Observant nuns from San Servolo were installed alongside the Conventual nuns of San Zaccaria, show that before this date the Doge attended the Easter service in the Gothic nuns' church.<sup>146</sup> The Doge's ceremonial book preserved in Biblioteca Marciana in Venice is dated 1590, at which point the service probably took place in the recently completed Renaissance church.<sup>147</sup> In the new church, Hopkins has suggested that a portal situated at the extreme south-western corner of the nave could have been specifically for the Doge's ceremonial route, creating two distinct entrances at the west end.<sup>148</sup>

The nuns' choir was not only the setting for impressive liturgical events, but for activities of a more mundane nature. A contract dated 30 July 1515 between San Zaccaria and the Confraternity of the Nativity of the Virgin for an altar in the church of San Provolo was signed in the nuns' choir 'ut moris est'.<sup>149</sup> This phrase reveals that it was not an isolated event. In fact, the choir was an ideal place to discuss business, being a serious, solemn space with adequate seating for both parties and plenty of witnesses. The evidence of this document and the ceremonial descriptions, confirm that at San Zaccaria little importance

<sup>146</sup>The Observant nuns were introduced on 4 May 1519 by Antonio Contarini. In 1520, Sanudo described the argument between the Conventual and Observant nuns at San Zaccaria: 'the conventual nuns, on the one hand, wanted them [the Signory] to sit inside, but the Observant nuns, on the other, wanted them to sit outside, and so did the patriarch, and so it was.' Translation in Victoria Primhak, 'Benedictine communities in Venetian society: the convent of S. Zaccaria', in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. by Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), p. 101. See also Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in late Renaissance Venice* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 143–44.

<sup>147</sup>BMV, 7540 (=IT VII 1639), fol. 39r: 'Feste di Pasqua . . . si vā à Vespero à San Zaccaria, et si porta il corno ducale con le gioie, et s'apparecchiano à San Zaccaria molti banchi'.

<sup>148</sup>Hopkins (1998), p. 43.

<sup>149</sup>ASV, San Zaccaria, Pergamene 1, loose sheet dated 30 July 1515: 'congregati ad sonum campanelle in earum coro ut moris est . . . Actum Venetiis in choro monasterii Sancti Zacharie'.



was placed on clausura, at least until the 1519 reform.<sup>150</sup>

The texts describing ceremony in San Zaccaria—the fifteenth-century ceremonial book, 1469 visit of the Emperor, and the 1505 ceremonial—can give us insights into the general use of the choir. All three texts witness the central importance of the choir in liturgical events. It is clear that the choir was divided into two ranges: the side of the abbess and the side of the prioress, although the exact placement of the abbess's stall was not absolutely clear. The documents also show that the choir was a versatile space which could be used for different events by diverse groups of people.

## 5.5 Reconstruction of the choir

In order to reconstruct the original choir arrangement, we need to ascertain where the choir was situated, the formation of the stalls, the number of stalls and their measurements. The liturgical texts have revealed that the choir was divided into two ranges: the side of the abbess and the side of the prioress. Therefore an opening must have appeared between the two ranges. The seats for the abbess and prioress would have been next to the entrance to the choir, corresponding to the position of hierarchically important stalls in choir precincts in male Benedictine houses, for instance Santa Giustina in Padua. In San Zaccaria, a grille at the east end of the choir faced the high altar, while an open screen at the west end (which could have been situated at the bay division) divided the choir from the last bay of the church, where the parlatorio was situated. The expensive crucifix on a carved beam was likely to have been associated with the eastern grille, while the crucifix and two statues of saints probably appeared above the western screen.

In order to accurately reconstruct the arrangement of the choir in San Zaccaria, the exact number of stalls needs to be determined. At present, forty-four stalls exist in the Chapel of Sant'Atanasio, but according to Paoletti, there were forty-eight stalls in 1893.<sup>151</sup> Frustratingly, the choir contract did not state the exact number of stalls, only that the final amount should be pleasing to the nuns. On 18 December 1464, the nuns paid Marco Cozzi for forty-nine seats at a price of ten ducats each.<sup>152</sup> However, it would be most

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<sup>150</sup>Primhak commented that 'normally clausura was not enforced at San Zaccaria.' Primhak (2000), p. 99.

<sup>151</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 84.

<sup>152</sup>See footnote 57 on page 204.

unusual for a choir situated in front of the high altar to have an odd number of seats, resulting in assymetry between the two ranges. Only later sixteenth-century choirs situated in semi-circular formations comprised an odd number of stalls. The nuns surely kept the sample stall requested in the contract, but withholding payment as it formed part of the Cozzi's obligations. This brings the number of stalls up to fifty, divided into two ranges of twenty-five. Since all the stalls have high superstructures, they must have all been in one upper row, and no substalls were requested in the contract.

Having established the number of stalls, their position in the old church needs to be determined. Paoletti's reconstruction of two screens in the church omitted the stalls completely, which is misleading considering the large amount of space they would have occupied (Fig. 206). When the choir was installed in 1464, the north nave aisle had already been destroyed to make way for the new church, leaving the central and south aisles. Could the choir have filled the entire width of this remaining section, as Radke seems to suggest?<sup>153</sup> This arrangement is unlikely since it would result in some nuns having their view of the high altar obscured by nave piers, and because assymetric choir placements were extremely rare if not unprecedented.<sup>154</sup> Therefore the choir most probably only filled the width of the central vessel, a position also favoured by Aikema and Bergamaschi.<sup>155</sup>

The final part of this reconstruction requires accurate measurements of the surviving stalls. Figure 207 is a measured drawing showing the current disposition of forty-four stalls in the Chapel of Sant'Atanasio (the width of the ranges includes their wooden base). Figure 208 is a proposed reconstruction of the fifteenth-century space. Originally, there would have been twenty-five stalls on each side of the choir, the stalls having an average width of 700mm. Two sets of stall-junctions still survive, showing that each range had one corner. Allowing for two stalls on the return ranges, the total length of the choir would have been around 16.24m, leaving a gap of 2.04m for the entrance.

A change in floor level at the intersection of the *cappella maggiore* and the nave shows that the stalls could not have extended beyond this point. The raised floor of the *cappella maggiore* accommodates the Romanesque crypt beneath, which still survives.<sup>156</sup> The

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<sup>153</sup>Radke stated that 'The choir probably filled the entire width of the church's relatively narrow nave'. Radke (2001), p. 451.

<sup>154</sup>The present author knows of no assymetrical choir arrangements in northern Italy.

<sup>155</sup>Aikema (2000), p. 35. Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), p. 8.

<sup>156</sup>Tramontin argued that the crypt cannot be later than the tenth or eleventh centuries, and bears

original position of particular stalls is harder to determine, but the abbess's stall was probably the first on the south, and the stall bearing the Cozzi's inscription would have been on a terminal stall-end. This location of the abbess's stall accords with the placement of dignitaries' stalls in other extant choir precincts.<sup>157</sup>

Kneelers or *prospere* would have been placed in front of the stalls arranged with various openings to allow nuns to access the stalls, as indicated in the choir contract.<sup>158</sup> As none of the kneelers survives they have not been included on the reconstructed plan. In this reconstruction, the choir would have occupied almost two bays of the three-bay nave, dominating the interior (nave bays are shown in red in Fig. 209). As the new church was not intended to house a choir, the nuns could almost completely fill the centre of the Gothic church with stalls.

In the nave of the Gothic church, a Cosmatesque pavement is dated to before the thirteenth century.<sup>159</sup> Part of the mosaic, a classic rose design formed from a variety of different coloured marbles, is visible in the present-day chapel of Sant'Atanasio (Fig. 204). The sophisticated planning of the choir space is shown by the neat alignment of the circular design of the medieval pavement between the two ranges of stalls (shown in green in Fig. 209). Little is known about the rest of the mosaic design, but it is likely that it followed the longitudinal axis of the nave, framed by the two ranges of stalls.

The present reconstruction differs slightly from that offered by Roberto Bergamaschi in his restoration report on the choir in San Zaccaria.<sup>160</sup> Bergamaschi maintains that the choir was in a U-shape, as evidenced by the survival of only two terminal stalls (E9 and W9), the recorded payment for an odd number of stalls, and the presence of a single dignitary's stall (E1) which would have been in the centre of the row (Fig. 205).<sup>161</sup> However, the

similarities to San Marco. Silvio Tramontin, *San Zaccaria*, Venezia Sacra no. 13 (Venice: Luigi Salvagno, 1979), p. 20.

<sup>157</sup>See for instance Santa Giustina in Padua and the Frari in Venice.

<sup>158</sup>The *prospere* had to be arranged 'lassando tutti quali spazi varii dove se intra nel coro'. ASV, San Zaccaria, Pergamene 1, loose sheet dated 26 March 1455.

<sup>159</sup>The presence of 'pietra di aurisina' can help date the pavement to before the thirteenth century. Maria Mangano, Lorenzo Lazzarini and Wladimiro Dorigo, 'I materiali lapidei nei pavimenti in opus sectile di chiese veneziane del XII secolo', in *Atti del 5. Colloquio dell'Associazione Italiana per lo studio e la conservazione del mosaico : Roma, 3-6 novembre 1997*, ed. by Federico Guidobaldi and Andrea Paribeni (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>160</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>). The present author has been unable to consult Menegazzi and Bergamaschi's most recent article on the San Zaccaria choir: Giovanna Menegazzi and Roberto Bergamaschi, 'Il restauro del coro ligneo di San Zaccaria', in *Arte nelle Venezia. Scritti di amici per Sandro Sponza*, eds C. Ceschi, P. Fantelli, F. Flores d'Arcais (Saonara: Il Prato, 2007), pp. 209–13.

<sup>161</sup>Bergamaschi and Menegazzi (2000<sup>2</sup>), pp. 8–10.

survival of two terminal stalls does not necessarily exclude the possibility of more, given the significant losses at the end of the sixteenth century. Bergamaschi defines terminal stalls as those whose exposed stall-ends were carved from single pieces of wood. In fact, since the abbess' stall has obviously had sections added to the seat-capping and canopy, it could have originally had a more uniformly finished stall-end. Furthermore, it is difficult to comprehend how the nuns would have entered the choir without an opening at the west end, and the liturgical documents make clear that there were two sides in the choir.

In addition, the current disposition of stalls in the chapel of Sant'Atanasio might reflect their original arrangement. The abbess's stall is currently situated to the left of the altar (furnished with Tintoretto's painting of *The Birth of John the Baptist*), while the rest of the stalls form two rough C-shapes interrupted by two doorways to east and west. This arrangement might have resulted from an attempt to maintain roughly the original seating layout in the new chapel, to avoid significant disruption of liturgical practices. If the position of the abbess's stall in the centre of a row was an important feature in the original layout, then it would have been maintained in the repositioned choir. Instead, the abbess's stall was placed at the terminal of a row, supporting this reconstruction theory.

It is clear from the stalls contract that the nuns were particularly concerned with the visual aspects of their choir. The reconstruction presented here also reveals that the scale of the choir precinct echoed the splendour of the furniture. The choir would have almost filled two bays of the three-bay nave, dominating the interior. However, when the choir was installed in 1464, construction of the new church was well underway, showing that the nuns had already decided to keep the Gothic church as a more reserved space. Interestingly, despite the large scale of the choir precinct in San Zaccaria, it would not have accommodated all the nuns at the convent. In 1456 there were around seventy nuns, as noted in Pope Callixtus III's *breve*; in 1596 there were sixty-eight nuns; while in 1609 there were seventy choir nuns out of a total community of ninety-six.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup>The 1456 *breve* from Callixtus III, as quoted in Cornelio (1749), vol. 13, p. 389: 'ipsius Monasterii, in quo 70. moniales, vel circa numero existunt'. The statistics for 1596 and 1609 were noted in Mary Laven, *Virgins of Venice. Enclosed Lives and Broken Vows in the Renaissance Convent* (London: Viking, 2002), pp. 1, 123, 212n.

## 5.6 Placement of nuns' choirs

Was the dominant position of the nuns' choir in San Zaccaria particularly unusual? The popular image of convent life is of a cloistered and hidden existence, but the example of San Zaccaria throws this into relief. Indeed, the pilgrim Pietro Casola noted:

There are many women there, both young and old, and they let themselves be seen very willingly. They have a beautiful new church and many relics in the altar. I think it is their first church, because they have their choir there. They are said to be very rich, and do not trouble much about being seen.<sup>163</sup>

Comparison with other nuns' choirs can help assess the uniqueness of this situation, although this is limited by the poor survival rate. Few nuns' choirs remain in their original position due to the suppression of many convents in the Napoleonic era. Distinction should also be made between Benedictine and mendicant convents, which were regulated by different central bodies.

Benedictine nuns' churches often had two distinct choirs, as in the Venetian convent of Santa Croce di Giudecca. Although the church and convent have long since fallen into disrepair, architectural plans from the early sixteenth century illustrate the internal divisions of sacred space.<sup>164</sup> An annotated diagram of the church describes two choirs (Fig. 210).<sup>165</sup> A choir 'dabasso' at the west end of the church was surrounded by a low wall and columns which provided a clear view of the whole church. Primhak suggested that this seating area was for distinguished visitors to the church rather than the nuns themselves.<sup>166</sup> In addition, a screen consisting of seven open arches traversed the middle of the church, surmounted by a cross over the central opening.

The choir 'de sopra' was also at the west, above the lower precinct. It was reserved for the nuns and contained a total of 124 seats: seventy stalls in two rows around the edge of the space, and fifty-four stalls in the centre.<sup>167</sup> On the schematic plan, two rows of

<sup>163</sup>Hewett (1907), p. 136. This text was also cited by Radke in Radke (2001), p. 454.

<sup>164</sup>The church was rebuilt 1508 and 1515 and Primhak dated the plans to this period. Primhak (1991), pp. 80–81.

<sup>165</sup>ASV, Santa Croce della Giudecca, busta 4, disegno 14.

<sup>166</sup>Primhak (1991), p. 79.

<sup>167</sup>ASV, Santa Croce della Giudecca, busta 4, disegno 14: 'e si fara in quello sedie septanta dentro e de fuori a siadamento. E in quel de mezo sera luogo per .54. cinquanta e quatro done. E nel choro in tuto sera per cento vintiequatro done'.

forty-four and thirty-six stalls were arranged in a U-shape around three walls, while in the centre a grid totalling fifty-four squares indicated the secondary seating block. It would be fascinating to discover precisely how this central block functioned: was it temporary seating or were the stalls arranged in rows? Evidently, the nuns at Santa Croce della Giudecca had a very different choir placement from San Zaccaria, and given the greater amount of seats the stalls themselves were probably less expensive.<sup>168</sup>

In other Benedictine convents in Venice, little material survives from the fifteenth century to indicate precise choir placements. The church of San Lorenzo was completely rebuilt by architect Simone Sorella between 1592 and 1602.<sup>169</sup> In the new church, the nuns' choir was enclosed behind the high altar, but apparently had very impressive stalls.<sup>170</sup> Sant'Anna in Castello, founded c. 1300, was also rebuilt between 1634 and 1659 by architect Francesco Contin, impeding an assessment of the medieval fabric.<sup>171</sup> A sixteenth-century plan of the Benedictine Observant nuns' church on the lagoon island of San Servolo shows that the choir was on a western raised balcony. On the plan, two columns at the west end of the nave are labelled 'colone del palco'.<sup>172</sup>

Outside Venice, the division of sacred space at San Zaccaria was paralleled in the Benedictine convent of Sant'Antonio in Polesine in Ferrara. At Sant'Antonio, renovations in the fifteenth century involved the enlarging of the public church, the fresco decoration of the central chapel or *cappella maggiore*, and the construction of choir stalls (Fig. 211).<sup>173</sup> As in the reconstruction of San Zaccaria, the choir (number six on the plan) in Sant'Antonio dominates the space between the public part of the church (number two) and the high altar (number seven). Divided into two ranges, seventy-two stalls fill the large area between the grille overlooking the public church and three chapels at the east end. The side chapels frescoed between the end of the thirteenth and start of the fourteenth century, and the central chapel in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>168</sup>Primhak concluded that if the nuns of Santa Croce had spent 10 ducats per stall, the total expenditure would have been 1240 ducats, an incredible amount for a relatively poor convent. Primhak (1991), p. 80.

<sup>169</sup>Zorzi (1972), p. 514.

<sup>170</sup>Stringa characterised the choir as 'due massi di sedili di noghera vagamente lavorati, con la sede dell'Abbadessa... molto ricca, messa tuta ad oro'. Zorzi (1972), p. 514.

<sup>171</sup>Zorzi (1972), p. 488.

<sup>172</sup>The plan can be found in Laven (2002), p. 12.

<sup>173</sup>The convent was founded by Beatrice d'Este in 1249. *Emilia e Romagna* (1957), p. 630.

<sup>174</sup>Three different masters contributed to the fresco cycles in the side chapels, which depict scenes from the life of the Virgin, the infancy of Christ and the Passion of Christ. Letizia Caselli, *Il monastero di S. Antonio in Polesine. Un approccio storico artistico in età medievale* (Padua: Spazio libri editori, 1992), p.

In a similar arrangement to San Zaccaria, a fifteenth-century wooden crucifix on a beam is located at the entrance to the high altar chapel. In the choir, five stalls were given hierarchical importance through the use of intarsia patterns on the stall-backs: the westernmost two on either side, and the eastern terminal on the south side, closest to the high altar. This positioning could help us to unravel the complex situation at San Zaccaria as revealed by descriptions of liturgical events. As we have seen, when the Emperor visited the Venetian convent, he sat in the *cappella maggiore*, near to or next to the abbess. In Sant'Antonio in Polesine, also a Benedictine convent, the last seat on the south side was given particular prominence, a placement which might have also been adopted at San Zaccaria for this special occasion.

The nuns' choir in Sant'Uldarico in Parma, which shares visual similarities to San Zaccaria, was located behind the high altar of the public church, and separated by a dividing wall. Within the choir, an altar on the west side of the dividing wall was embellished with an altarpiece by Michele e Pier Ilario Mazzola, now in the Galleria Nazionale di Parma, while the stalls were arranged in a rectilinear fashion along the side walls.<sup>175</sup> Pellegri has shown that this particular nuns' choir placement was followed in most of the female Benedictine convents in Parma.<sup>176</sup> The choir was placed in the same location in the aristocratic Benedictine convent of San Paolo in Parma, with its refined intarsia stalls completed by Luchino Bianchino in 1510.<sup>177</sup>

Reformed Benedictine houses in northern Italy again show different choir arrangements. In 1455, the convent of San Salvatore e Santa Giulia in Brescia received an influx of Observant nuns and in 1466 the abbess Elena Masperoni commissioned the building of a new monumental choir to replace the previous wooden barco.<sup>178</sup> In the medieval church

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45. The central chapel has various frescoes depicting the Madonna and child with saints on the left wall, and the martyrdom of St Stephen, the Madonna enthroned with saints Antonio Abate and Francis, the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, and the Madonna and child on the right wall. *Emilia e Romagna* (1957), p. 631.

<sup>175</sup>This follows the reconstruction suggested by Pellegri. Pellegri (1999), pp. 166–67. The altarpiece by Michele e Pier Ilario Mazzola is dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, and depicts the Virgin and Child enthroned with saints Uldarico, John the Baptist and Joseph. Fornari Schianchi (1997), p. 120, cat. 109.

<sup>176</sup>These included the convents of San Paolo, San Quintino, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Santa Elisabetta, San Giovanni Gerolomitano, Sant'Alessandro, and Santa Cristina coi Teatini. Pellegri (1999), p. 169.

<sup>177</sup>See Felice Da Mareto, *Chiese e conventi di Parma* (Parma: Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province Parmensi, 1978), p. 173, fig. 240 for a plan of the church.

<sup>178</sup>Alessandro Rovetta, 'L'evoluzione architettonica dei Santa Giulia in età rinascimentale', in *Arte, cultura e religione in Santa Giulia*, ed. by Giancarlo Andenna (Grafo, 2004), p. 123.

of San Salvatore the nuns' choir was probably situated on a raised wooden barco in the last bay of the nave, allowing easy access from the convent's living quarters.<sup>179</sup> The new choir building on two levels was attached to the western wall of the church; the lower atrium was at the same level as the church while the upper hall—which housed the stalls—was significantly higher than the church (Fig. 213).<sup>180</sup> Ninety-one choir stalls were commissioned in 1530 to Andrea Moroni,<sup>181</sup> while the expansive fresco decoration of the raised choir was also completed in the third decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>182</sup> A similar arrangement was adopted in the early sixteenth-century reformed Benedictine church of San Maurizio Maggiore in Milan, where the ten-bay nave was divided by a high wall into two sections of four bays for the laity and six bays for the nuns' choir, both on the same floor level.<sup>183</sup>

Mendicant convent churches in Venice tended to feature raised wooden choir galleries. One of the only two surviving mendicant nuns' choirs in Venice is in the Augustinian church of Sant'Alvise in Cannaregio.<sup>184</sup> The raised western gallery is supported by fifteenth-century marble columns and wooden buttresses, although the large rectangular windows filled with iron grilles date to the eighteenth century (Fig. 212).<sup>185</sup> Barcos such as these allowed the nuns a clear if distant, view of the high altar, whilst they remained hidden from public view.

The Augustinian nunnery of Santa Maria delle Vergini in Venice, which belonged to the order of San Marco Evangelista di Mantova, probably had a completely different choir placement.<sup>186</sup> In around 1400, a new choir was completed at the expense of one of the nuns, although its precise location is not known.<sup>187</sup> The pilgrim Pietro Casola noted in

<sup>179</sup>Rovetta (2004), p. 135. A liturgical text from 1438 describes the raised choir: 'ascendere supra chorum'. Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 43.

<sup>180</sup>Later in the sixteenth century, the new church of Santa Giulia was added to the west of the choir, sandwiching the nuns space between two lay churches. It was completed in 1599. Rovetta (2004), p. 138.

<sup>181</sup>Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 51.

<sup>182</sup>The frescoes were painted by Floriano Ferramola, Paolo da Caylina il Giovane and other Brescian artists. Lucchesi Ragni, Gianfranceschi and Mondini (2003), p. 65.

<sup>183</sup>The church was begun in 1503. Angela Ottino della Chiesa and Primo Reina, *San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore* (Milan: Silvana, 1963), p. 20.

<sup>184</sup>A *barco* also survives in the Franciscan Clarissan nuns' church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli.

<sup>185</sup>Franzoi and Di Stefano (1976), p. 130.

<sup>186</sup>Lowe (2001), p. 400.

<sup>187</sup>The *Cronaca* of the convent, quoted in Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna, *Delle iscrizioni veneziane*, vol. 5 (Venice: Giuseppe Molinari, 1842), p. 13: 'et allora compido el choro el qual fece far Madona Franceschina Bondumier monica del loco di suoi propri beni.'



1494 that the nuns ‘have a beautiful church with the choir in a prominent position.’<sup>188</sup> The church no longer survives, but the phrase ‘prominent position’ suggests that the choir was in the main body of the church rather than in a western gallery. The tomb slab of Abbess Francesca Zorzi dating to 1428 was documented as lying ‘at the entrance to the choir’ of the church.<sup>189</sup> It is likely that in the fifteenth century the choir was situated behind the high altar, as Cicogna noted that after a fire of 1487 a choir ‘supported by vaults’ was built around the walls of the *cappella maggiore*, possibly replacing the earlier furniture.<sup>190</sup> Later in 1546, a ‘barco’ or ‘coro pensile’ was built against the internal face of the western wall, providing the nuns with a second choir area. Jäggi has shown that mendicant nuns’ churches often featured two distinct choir spaces—a western raised gallery and eastern monumental choir—which could have been used for different liturgical functions.<sup>191</sup>

Choir placement at San Zaccaria may appear unusual, but a Roman Benedictine convent seems to have had an analogous building chronology. Santa Maria in Campo Marzio in Rome was founded in the eighth century to house the relics of St Gregory Nazianzus from Constantinople, becoming a repository for noble women of the city.<sup>192</sup> The medieval church was built in the first decades of the twelfth century, but between 1562 and 1564 Abbess Chiarina Colonna financed a new church destined for public use.<sup>193</sup> The old church was kept in clausura for the sole use of the nuns, and contained stalls placed ‘giro in giro’ around the walls.<sup>194</sup>

Apparently the stalls themselves were not as impressive as those in San Zaccaria, but the idea of maintaining two churches for different functions is certainly comparable.<sup>195</sup> The two convents do not appear to have documented links, but it is probably not entirely coincidental that San Zaccaria also claimed to have the full-body relic of St Gregory Nazianzus. This dispute might have brought the two convents into contact, perhaps leading

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<sup>188</sup>Hewett (1907), p. 136.

<sup>189</sup>This description is from BCV, cod. Cicogna 317, quoted in Lowe (2001), p. 416.

<sup>190</sup>Cicogna (1842), p. 8: ‘La cappella maggiore, che ancora esiste, ed il coro sostenuto da volti, che fino al 1822 intorno vi girava, sono lavori posteriori all’epoca del secondo incendio’.

<sup>191</sup>Jäggi (2001), pp. 86–87.

<sup>192</sup>I am very grateful to Federico Botana for making this example known to me.

<sup>193</sup>Augusto Fraccareta, ‘Notizie sul monastero benedettino di S. Maria in Campo Marzio’, *L’Urbe* 4, no. 4 (April 1939), p. 27.

<sup>194</sup>Fraccareta (1939), pp. 27, 29.

<sup>195</sup>In 1914 the choir was moved to the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, and six stalls remained in 1939, when Fraccareta pronounced that they had ‘scarississimo valore artistico’. Fraccareta (1939), p. 34n.

the Roman convent to imitate the division of space at San Zaccaria.<sup>196</sup> Alternatively, the two communities could have responded in similar ways to corresponding needs: the desire to create more space for pilgrims and laity whilst maintaining an impressive choir area for the nuns.<sup>197</sup>

Benedictine and mendicant convents in Venice and northern Italy display few consistencies in choir placement. Convent churches could have raised choirs on barcos, segregated seating behind the high altar or a combination of different solutions. At San Zaccaria it would seem that the choir was positioned in a prominent location, but by the time it was installed the new church project was well underway. The old church of San Zaccaria was already being converted into a more private space for the nuns, while the adjacent new church was designed solely for public use.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The construction of the new church of San Zaccaria showed that nuns wanted their own, more private space. Central to this vision was the choir. Liturgical descriptions and ceremonials show that the choir was an integral part of important events such as the installation of a new abbess and visits of high-ranking dignitaries. This centrality permeated into the physical presence of the choir itself. Not only did the precinct occupy a dominant position in the Gothic nave, but the stalls themselves were designed to exacting requirements.

However, the choir of San Zaccaria was not as unique as it may at first seem. The Benedictine nuns of Sant'Uldarico in Parma also commissioned stalls with precise instructions for the craftsman, in imitation of a nearby male mendicant choir. The finished stalls also show striking similarities with the most unusual aspect of the San Zaccaria stalls: the geometric intarsia stall-backs. As for the prominent placement of the choir, there were few consistencies among north-Italian Benedictine convent churches from which to

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<sup>196</sup>Carusi however, points out that the body of St Gregory Nazianzus was described as still being in Constantinople in the thirteenth century. Enrico Carusi, *Cartario di S. Maria in Campo Marzio* (Rome: Società alla Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 1948), p. xv.

<sup>197</sup>A similar situation developed at the male Benedictine house of Santa Giustina in Padua. After renovations to the medieval church culminating in new choir stalls dated 1467–77, the monks decided to build a new church to the immediate left of the old one in 1498, retaining the old fabric presumably for private use. See p. 168.

diverge. Given that the San Zaccaria choir was not intended to form part of a public church, different rules applied. The building history of San Zaccaria may seem singular, but the example of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio in Rome shows that another Benedictine convent retained its old choir for private use alongside a modern public church.

Nevertheless, the case of San Zaccaria is unique in its particularly rich store of extant materials and artworks including paintings, furniture and the Gothic building itself. The old church of San Zaccaria would have been a wealth of colour and precious materials: glittering gold of the three Gothic altarpieces, the high altarpiece with its silver panel; frescoes in the apse and nave; the mosaic pavement; terracotta statues, screens and crosses; intarsia choir stalls painted with blue and gold; and textiles which adorned the choir and chapel on special occasions. Documentary evidence has provided insights into the position of the furniture, screens and grilles, and their diverse functions. Choir stalls were fundamental to the division of sacred space and the creation of a private area for the nuns, full of colour, pattern and luxury.

## Chapter 6

# The Choir Stalls of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice

When the modern visitor enters the basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice, they immediately see the glowing tones of Titian's *Assunta* over the high altar, framed by the marble choir screen in the nave (Fig. 214). After pausing to admire the tombs of Canova and Titian, they will approach the screen, observing the carved prophets gazing up at the crucified Christ. As they ascend the steps into the choir precinct, the visitor will perhaps notice the intarsia panels and intricate carving of the 124 choir stalls before seeing close up the climax of the church's decoration: the jubilant Virgin floating up to the heavenly realm above. Constructed sometime earlier in 1475, the choir precinct was not conceived as a frame for the 1518 altarpiece, but as a structure with precise meanings and functions for the fifteenth-century friars. Its survival into modern times—one of the few remaining Italian precincts in its original position—is due in part to its visual interaction with the high altarpiece. However, rather than becoming a central example in the history of Italian choirs, art historians have generally seen the Frari structure as a 'chance' survival.

The Frari wooden stalls have not been the subject of a significant monographic study and, because of the mediocre quality of their intarsia *a toppo* panels, are rarely mentioned in general literature on the technique.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the Frari choir is usually cited as an

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<sup>1</sup>Treatment of the Frari stalls in art-historical literature includes Paoletti (1893–1897), pp. 84–86, Giovanni Mariacher, 'I cori lignei di Santa Maria dei Frari in Venezia e del Duomo di Spilimbergo', *Ateneo Veneto* CXXVI (1939), Gertrud Otto, 'Die Reliefs am Chorgestühl der Frari-Kirche in Venedig, das werk eines Deutschen', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 5 (1937), J. A. Schmoll gen

example of a chance survival of stalls and screen in their original position in the east bays of the nave. Marcia Hall, in her seminal 1978 article on Italian rood screens, saw the Frari example as unusual, clarifying her position in a recent article:

The tramezzi that were not torn down seem to have been preserved either because they did not completely impede lay participation in the Mass, or because they were decorated with sculpture or painting that would have to be destroyed, both conditions present at the Frari in Venice.<sup>2</sup>

Paola Modesti, in her assessment of the impact of the 1581 Apostolic Visitation on Venetian choirs, commented that the Frari is an unusual example that has contributed to misleading reconstructions of lost choirs.<sup>3</sup> The stalls and screen have not been examined in terms of their style, technique or iconography, and the placement and survival of the choir has not been fully explained.

In this chapter, the Frari's choir precinct will be examined in two sections, the first dealing with the decoration of the choir stalls themselves, placing them in the context of other woodwork in the Frari and the earlier stalls at the Santo in Padua. The Venetian stalls will be analysed in comparison to contemporary stalls and woodwork, including altarpiece frames and *cassoni*. Saints depicted on the stalls will be related to the placement of altars in the church. The second part of the chapter will deal with the precedents and decoration of the marble choir screen, and the placement of the choir in the east bays of the church.<sup>4</sup> Was the Frari choir a unique structure in fifteenth-century Venice or typical of mendicant precincts of the time? Although later renovations disturbed many fifteenth-century structures in other churches, why has the Frari choir remained in its original position to the present day?

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Eisenwerth, 'Zum Werk des "Straßburger Frari-Meisters von 1468"', *Annales Universitatis Saraviensis* (1958), Antonio Sartori, *S. M. Gloriosa dei Frari, Venezia* (Padua: Il Messaggero di S. Antonio, 1956), pp. 72–75, Alberici (1980), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Hall (2006), p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>Modesti (2002), p. 44: 'ha spesso costituito un riferimento per immaginare le strutture corali scomparse delle quali risulta la stessa collocazione, talvolta con risultati fuorvianti'.

<sup>4</sup>Although the Frari is oriented towards the south-west, for the purposes of the thesis references to liturgical directions will be made, to simplify relationships between different churches.

## 6.1 The artistic and architectural setting

The first Franciscan church on the site was established during the office of doge Jacopo Tiepolo (1229–49), but the first secure document records a donation given by Giovanni Badoer in 1234.<sup>5</sup> The foundation stone for a second church was laid as soon as 1250, a year after Pope Innocent IV granted indulgences for contributors to the building project.<sup>6</sup> In around 1330 the present building was begun on a reverse orientation, with the high altar facing south-west.<sup>7</sup> Building work proceeded from the *cappella maggiore* towards the main portal and was probably almost finished in 1428, when the old church was completely demolished and the stone bridge across the Rio dei Frari was begun.<sup>8</sup>

The date 1468 is often cited as the end of building work simply because it is inscribed on the stalls, but construction of the vaults could have extended into the 1480s.<sup>9</sup> From the mid-fifteenth century, chapels were ceded to various noble families and confraternities, who embellished their altars with paintings and sculptures. Architecturally, the building bears many comparisons to the contemporary Dominican church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, which also features substantial nave piers, brick walls and painted tie-beams.<sup>10</sup>

The position of the choir precinct was an integral part of the layout of the whole building and was planned from its initiation (Fig. 217). Its location was determined by an increase in floor level between the fourth and fifth nave piers, which does not correspond to the centre of a bay, or divide the church into two or three equal portions.<sup>11</sup> As a fundamental structural feature, floor level must have been calculated at the start of the

<sup>5</sup>The presence of a Franciscan community in this part of Venice could have been inspired by a visit by St Francis himself to the lagoon island of San Francesco del Deserto. Isidoro Gatti, *S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Storia di una presenza francescana a Venezia* (Venice: Edizioni delle Grafiche Veneziane, 1992), pp. 11, 23, 26.

<sup>6</sup>Gatti (1992), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>Rona Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice. Bellini, Titian and the Franciscans* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Document dated 10 October 1428. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1904. Goffen (1986), p. 10. Gatti (1992), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>A view of Venice by Erhard Reuwich in his *Civitas Jherusalem* (printed in Magonza 1486 but designed in 1483) shows figures on the roof of the Frari, suggesting that building work was still in progress. Valenzano, however, agrees with Dellwing that 1468 must be the *terminus ante quem* because the friars were unlikely to have installed expensive delicate furniture under an incomplete roof. Giovanna Valenzano, ‘Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari’, in *L’architettura gotica veneziana. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studio, Venezia, 27–29 novembre 1996*, ed. by Francesco Valcanover and Wolfgang Wolters (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2000), p. 130.

<sup>10</sup>Valenzano (2000), p. 129.

<sup>11</sup>It was common for tramezzi to cross the nave avoiding the bay divisions, as seen in Fra Carnevale’s *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple(?)*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See also Vittore Carpaccio, *The Vision of Prior Ottobon*, Venice, Accademia.

project. The fifth nave piers have a barbed trefoil cross-section and more elaborate foliate capitals, differing from the plain round columns in the main body of the nave (Fig. 218). Similar columns in the same position in Santi Giovanni e Paolo can also indicate the location of the lost Dominican choir precinct. In the Frari, both the increase in floor level and distinctive pier design emphasise the elevated status of the choir area.

The 124 choir stalls in the Frari were completed in 1468 by the workshop of Marco Cozzi di Vicenza, as an inscription on the south-east flank of the stalls testifies,<sup>12</sup> while the marble choir screen bears a date of 1475 (Fig. 215). There must have been earlier (perhaps temporary) seating, but no surviving documents describe its scale or decoration. Soon after its construction, the Frari choir was praised in Venetian guidebooks and antiquarian literature. In Sanudo's *De origine, situ et magistratibus urbis Venetae ovvero La città di Venetia (1493–1530)* the only two choirs listed amongst 'Notable things in Venice' were those in Sant'Elena and the Frari, which he called 'bellissimo'.<sup>13</sup> Francesco Sansovino also mentioned the choir in his 1581 tribute to Venice, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare*, focusing on its patronage: 'the façade before the choir is all of marble, and the figures of prophets were done through the work of the Morosini house'.<sup>14</sup> Vincenzo Coronelli noted in 1744: 'in the centre of this church there is a very beautiful choir, surrounded on the inside by very beautiful carved figures, and on the outside by figures, and pictures of celebrated authors'.<sup>15</sup> In modern guidebooks the choir structure is presented as a highlight of the visitors' experience, but in general scholarship is often overlooked.

Early writings do not agree over the authorship of the stalls. The mathematician and Franciscan friar Luca Pacioli suggested that Lorenzo Canozi was responsible for the intarsia panels on the Frari stalls, declaring in his 1509 work, *De Divina proportione*: 'Master Lorenzo Canozi da Lendenara... was in those times its [intarsia's] supreme [craftsman], which was demonstrated for all in his famous intarsia work in the worthy choir of the Santo

<sup>12</sup>The inscription reads 'MARCUS CONDAM IOHANNIS PETRI DE VICENTIA FECIT HOC OPUS 1468'. Marco di Vicenza was referred to as Marco Cozzi after a document relating to the choir of San Zaccaria in 1545. Venice, Archivio di Stato, San Zaccaria, indice gen, b4, t III, b54, t1. Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 84.

<sup>13</sup>Sanudo il giovane (1980), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup>Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare descritta in XIII libri* (Bergamo: Leading Edizioni, 2002), fol. 66r: 'la facciata davanti del coro tutta di marmo, fu lavorata per opera della casa Morosina a figure di Profeti.'

<sup>15</sup>Vincenzo Coronelli, *Guida de' Forestieri o sia epitome diaria perpetua sagra-profana per la città di Venezia* (Venice 1744), p. 278: 'Nel mezzo di questa Chiesa vi è un bellissimo Coro, circondato al di dentro da bellissime figure d'intaglio, e al di fuori da figure, e quadri di celebri Autori.'

in Padua and its sacristy, and in Venice at the *Ca grande* [the Frari].<sup>16</sup> This attribution is highly unlikely given the higher standard of Canozzi's autographed works and the signature on the Frari stalls of 'Marco da Vicenza'. Pacioli is also mistaken about the author of sacristy panels in the Santo, which were commissioned to Pier Antonio degli Abati rather than Lorenzo Canozzi. Even in the twentieth century, Canozzi was still associated with the Frari. Sartori stated that the intarsia panels on the north and south pulpit doors were probably made by Lorenzo Canozzi even if the rest of the choir was by the Cozzi workshop.<sup>17</sup>

Confusion also surrounds fifteenth-century furniture in the Frari sacristy.<sup>18</sup> A contract of 1489 commissioning Lorenzo Canozzi's relative Pier Antonio degli Abati to produce benches for the sacristy in the Santo in Padua, states that they should be 'according to the form and design of the benches and seats existing in the sacristy of the church of the Great House [*Ca Grande*] the Minor Friars in the city of Venice'.<sup>19</sup> Although the contract mentions the stalls in the sacristy of the Frari, it could have actually referred to the extant choir stalls. The German pilgrim Arnoldo di Harff, who visited the Frari in 1497, described very expensive woodwork in the sacristy or 'gerkamer', without specifying whether it was seating, cupboards or *spalliere*.<sup>20</sup> But as he stated that two doges were buried in the 'choir', by the term 'gerkamer', which means sacristy, he could have mistakenly inferred the actual choir precinct, a mistake made by another north-European visitor to Italy.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Pacioli quoted in Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 85: 'Maestro Lorenzo Canozzi da Lendenara . . . fo a li tempi suoi supremo, che l'dimonstrato per tutto le sue famose opere in tarsia nel degno coro del Sancto de Padua e sua sacrestia, e in Venetia a la Ca grande.' The Frari was often called *Ca Grande*, or large house.

<sup>17</sup>Sartori (1956), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup>In her recent thesis, Lydia Hamlett did not discuss seating arrangements in the Frari sacristy. Lydia Hamlett, 'The Sacristy in Renaissance Venice', Ph.D. thesis (University of Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>19</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 61: 'secundum formam et designum banchorum et sedilium existentium in sacristia ecclesiae Domus Magnae Fratrum Minorum in civitate Venetiarum.'

<sup>20</sup>The original German reads: 'in deme choir lijgen ouch zweyn hertzouch gar koestlich hoych in der muyren in marmel steynen grauern, der ouch eyn wayl tzijen durent ducaeten gekost hayt. item in dessem cloister steyt eyn gerkamer, dae inne gar koestlich holtzwerck gesneden steyt, as man mit ougen sijen maich.' E. von Groote, ed., *Die Pilgerfahrt des Ritters Arnold von Harff* (Cologne: J. M. Heberle, 1860), p. 55. An English translation by Letts reads: 'In the choir lie two Doges very splendidly interred high up in the walls in marble-stone tombs, one of which cost as much as 2,000 ducats. Item in this monastery is a Sacristy in which is some very fine wood carving which one can see with one's own eyes.' Malcolm Letts, ed., *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1946), p. 67. Sartori misleadingly translated 'gar koestlich holtzwerck' as 'stalli corali di legno intagliato', but the original German does not state the type of woodwork. Sartori (1961), p. 62.

<sup>21</sup>Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1897), vol. 4, p. 3715: 'gerkammer: sacristei'. In 1645, the English gentleman John Evelyn visited the Olivetan church of San Michele in Bosco in Bologna and wrote in his diary 'But the Carvings in Wood of the Sacristie is stupendious; here is admirable inlay'd work about the Chapell that even emulates the best of paintings the Work is don so delicatly and tender.' *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. D. de Beer, II, Oxford, 1955, p. 423, quoted in Ferretti (1982), p. 460. In all probability Evelyn was referring to the intarsia panels of the choir, completed by Fra Raffaele da Brescia between 1513 and 1530. Zucchini (1943), pp. 34–36.



That said, it would have been highly unusual and legally ambiguous to have made a basic mistake in an official contract. The Santo sacristy contract cited ‘benches and seats’ in the Frari sacristy rather than stalls, suggesting that it indeed referred correctly to sacristy furniture. The chapel in the Frari sacristy was commemorated to Franceschina Tron Pesaro, who died in 1478.<sup>22</sup> The patron saints of her three sons Nicolò, Benedetto and Marco and their father Pietro featured in Giovanni Bellini’s altarpiece, dated to 1488 (Fig. 219). At this time of increased patronage, perhaps the Pesaro family also furnished the unusually large sacristy with intarsia benches, possibly made by the same woodworker who made seats for the *cappella maggiore* in the Frari.

Benches for the high altar chapel were commissioned in 1485 from the craftsman Paolo de Sacha, and were financed by the procurator of the church, Girolamo Delfin. In an inventory of the Frari’s archives, an entry for 18 June 1485 stated that Delfin had made an agreement with Paolo de Sacha to make intarsia (‘intestiatì’) benches for the *cappella maggiore* to be manufactured in Cremona.<sup>23</sup> In constructing the furniture outside Venice, he could have had assistance from his woodworker father, Tommaso da Sacha. The Cremonese woodworker Paolo de Sacha worked on numerous projects in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although his only surviving choir is in San Giovanni in Monte in Bologna, constructed in 1518–23 (Fig. 220).<sup>24</sup> According to Bonetti, the first document related to Sacha is dated 1486, making this little-known Frari commission his earliest documented work.<sup>25</sup> Although no archive sources survive to confirm the presence of sacristy stalls in the Frari, we can speculate that Paolo da Sacha was also involved in their creation.

The Frari stalls are a remarkable survival of a choir in its original location, but the large lectern which would have been in the centre of the precinct has since disappeared. The lectern is shown in Vincenzo Coronelli’s early eighteenth-century engraving of the choir viewed from the high altar (Fig. 221).<sup>26</sup> Positioned in the centre of the choir, it

<sup>22</sup>Goffen (1986), p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>ASV, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, busta 1, fol. 21v: ‘come anno 1485 Adi 18. Lugno il procuratore della fabrica signore Jerolimo Dolfino fa un concordo con maestro Paulo de Sacha, di far ale banchi intestiatì dela capella grade de frati minori pro ducati 200 quali si doveva far in Cremona.’ This particular document was not transcribed by Sartori, although he cited a similar quotation from P. Abate. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1804.

<sup>24</sup>Malaguzzi (1901), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup>Paolo da Sacha had a long career until his death in 1537. Bonetti (1919), p. 49.

<sup>26</sup>Vincenzo Coronelli, *Singolarità di Venezia e del Serenissimo suo dominio* (Venice 1709), p. 99.

had an eight-sided base possibly decorated with intarsia panels, and a cylindrical column supporting a triangular book ledge. Fortuitously, a lectern survives as part of the Cozzi workshop's later commission for the parish church of Santa Maria in Spilimbergo, dated 1475–77.

The Spilimbergo lectern gives us an idea of how the original lectern in the Frari might have looked, considering that the stalls were contracted to be identical to those completed by the Cozzi in Venice. An octagonal base is decorated with sixteen intarsia *a toppo* panels showing the same designs used in the choir stalls, flanked twisted columns and intarsia *a toppo* strips. A cylindrical column decorated with intarsia and carving supports a triangular book rest, inlaid with intarsia depicting three lines of plainchant music (see discussion in Chapter Three). Although the Spilimbergo contract did not mention the lectern, it is likely that the Frari lectern would have shared certain characteristics.

Reconstructing lost elements such as the choir lectern, wooden benches in the high altar area, and sacristy woodwork helps us to put the Frari stalls into their original context. Architectural features highlighted the honoured liturgical status of the choir precinct as a place for prayer, music and worship. The choir was one of the last architectural elements to be constructed in the church, but its position and scale were planned from the initiation of the building work in the mid-fourteenth century.

## 6.2 Style and technique of the Frari stalls

The Frari choir is a complex wooden structure consisting of many diverse decorative and constructional elements. A recent restoration report focussed on woodworm disinfestation also sheds light on the construction of the furniture and the identification of original elements.<sup>27</sup> The red and white squared pavement between the two ranges was a later intervention and does not continue under the stalls themselves. The structural framework of the choir has been described in Chapter One (p. 12), which remains hidden beneath the visible elements. Larch panels were placed vertically behind each seat, within which

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<sup>27</sup>The 1990 restoration was completed by Giorgio Baraschiutti under the direction of Dr Nepi and Dr Ruggeri of the Soprintendenza. This report, no. 5200 in the Soprintendenza archive, only contains photographs of the choir and no written documentation. The 2002 cleaning and disinfestation was undertaken by the restoration specialists Capovilla Pruneri. Capovilla Pruneri (2002). Previous restorations include an 1846 intervention by Candon and a 1923 project. Sartori (1956), p. 74.

oblong-shaped holes were bored possibly to enable free movement of air beneath (Fig. 223, Fig. 222, no. 1) Horizontal larch panels form the floor (Fig. 222, no. 2), while further horizontal cross beams were inserted into the vertical elements to which the stall-back and seat-back were attached.<sup>28</sup>

The stall-dividers and standards (no. 3 and no. 4), richly carved walnut with vegetal forms, were attached to the seat-capping and friezes beneath the canopy. The seat-capping was carved from single pieces of walnut, encompassing three or four stalls in length (no. 5).<sup>29</sup> The stall-backs of the third row (no. 6) are single pieces of larch with two excavated holes which house two panels—walnut carvings of saints and intarsia perspective scenes—nailed into place. The carved frames around the two panels were integral with the larch surrounds. The hinged seats themselves (no. 7) were composed of two panels of poplar wood.<sup>30</sup> Many of the seats have been replaced, and much of the intarsia patterns decorating the undersides and seat-backs (no. 8) have been damaged.

Double shell-niche canopies (no. 10) were excavated from two pieces of limewood, joined together by walnut following the undulating outline of the carving (Fig. 224). They connect to the stall-backs via carved walnut friezes called ‘tavola di chiusura’ in the restoration report (no. 9).<sup>31</sup> Gesso was applied before the niches were gilded and painted in blue tempera.<sup>32</sup> Around the shell niches carved concave gable frames (no. 11) are surmounted by gilded angels and flanked by cusped pinnacles carved from single pieces of walnut.<sup>33</sup> This canopy section was fixed to planks of conifer wood which act as a backing to the superstructure (no. 12). Larch, poplar, conifer and fir were used for the construction elements of the choir, while walnut was used for most of the decorative parts. The intarsia *a toppo* panels were composed of yew, conifer, maple, box, walnut, pear, oak, lime, ash and ebony.<sup>34</sup>

Aside from woodworm damage, the Frari choir has not sustained any serious damage

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<sup>28</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), pp. 3–4.

<sup>29</sup>The shape of the seat-capping allowed for semi-circular spaces for the actual stalls, meaning that a substantial amount of wood was wasted in the process.

<sup>30</sup>The hinges were originally of circular design but many have since been replaced. Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 6.

<sup>34</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 15.

or suffered harmful restorations.<sup>35</sup> Losses include bosses, angels and pinnacles from the canopy level, but all the carved saints and intarsia panels are original. Some of the intarsia *a buio* at the four entrances to the stalls have been replaced, as have some of the quadrants on the substalls.<sup>36</sup> In the 2002 restoration, remains of old surfaces were removed, the woodwork syringed with anti-woodworm solution, and a layer of beeswax applied.<sup>37</sup>

Stylistically, the Frari stalls are an amalgamation of contrasting elements: Gothic concave gables and pinnacles together with Renaissance shell niches; Italian perspective intarsia panels juxtaposed with German figural carving; and geometric intarsia *a toppo* patterns alongside swathes of carved foliage (Fig. 216). Compared to the rival Canozi workshop, run by Cristoforo and Lorenzo Canozi da Lendinara, the Cozzi workshop can be characterised by a lack of a homogeneous, consistent style. Marco Cozzi and his brother Francesco had previously constructed the choir stalls at San Zaccaria in Venice, commissioned in 1455 and completed in 1464 (Fig. 183). These stalls are characterised by geometric intarsia panels on the stall-backs, rich carving of the stall-dividers, shell niches and carved friezes. The Cozzi workshop would later build stalls at Santa Maria in Spilimbergo (commissioned in 1475) and Santo Stefano in Venice (inscribed 1488). In the Frari, fifty stalls in the upper row decorated with perspective intarsia *a toppo* panels depicting a range of architectural scenes below carved portraits of saints. As at San Zaccaria, the Frari stalls have ornate foliage carving in the stall-dividers and carved and intarsia friezes above. Decorative motifs include carved twisted columns flanking the stall-backs and a canopy level incorporating a double scalloped shell niche, pinnacles and arches topped with angels.

The abstract intarsia designs used on the stall-backs in San Zaccaria do not make an appearance in later Cozzi work and, while the stalls in the Frari and Spilimbergo are very similar, a different sculptor was used for the carved relief saints. At Santo Stefano in the 1480s, carvings of prophets and intarsia panels of vases of flowers and leaves make an appearance. The Cozzi could have worked with different craftsmen at San Zaccaria,

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<sup>35</sup>The Capovilla Pruneri team detected the presence of French polish (*gommalucca*), used in eighteenth-century restorations, and beeswax, which would have been used in an intervention of the nineteenth or twentieth century. Capovilla Pruneri (2002), p. 9.

<sup>36</sup>The intarsia *a buio* vase on the stall-end N1 has been replaced, as have most of the flowers on stall-end S25. Capovilla Pruneri (2002), folder 397/A (images).

<sup>37</sup>A large volume of debris (25m<sup>3</sup>) was found under the choir, consisting of bricks, stone, money and human and animal bones. Capovilla Pruneri (2002), pp. 11–12.

Spilimbergo and Santo Stefano, accounting for the mixture of several styles in the Frari stalls.<sup>38</sup>

In the Frari stalls, the concentration of ornament in the canopy level of the stalls was, as we shall see, related to the presence of impressive canopies on the contemporary stalls in the Santo in Padua. But the style of the canopies, with their concave gables surmounting intricate tracery and a double shell niche, is very Venetian. Similar canopies in Dalmatian stalls of the mid-fifteenth century might reflect contemporary church furniture in Venice, none of which survives. In a close composition to the Frari, the choir stalls in Zadar Cathedral (1418–51) have a canopy level composed of shell niches, ogee arches filled with tracery, carved figures above the arches, pinnacles between each stall and a plain wooden backing (Fig. 225). The stalls were completed by Matteo Moranzone, a Venetian carver who moved to Zadar with his family to work.<sup>39</sup> The carving of the Rab Cathedral stall canopies from 1445 reflects the Zadar examples, consisting of shell niches, ogee arches, tracery and small pinnacles.<sup>40</sup>

In the choir of Trogir Cathedral, commissioned in 1439, the canopy resembles the Frari version, consisting of painted shell niches surrounded by cusped ogee frames, surmounted by busts of prophets and flanked by pinnacles (Fig. 226).<sup>41</sup> This highly decorative ensemble is fixed to a wooden backing stencilled with gold stars. The most striking similarity between the Venetian and Dalmatian stalls is the plain wooden backing to which the canopy superstructure is attached, not present in north-Italian stalls on the mainland (no. 12 in Fig. 222). Links between Venice and Dalmatia were strong in the mid-fifteenth century, with stylistic comparisons being supplemented by documented instances of artistic exchange.<sup>42</sup> It is likely that stall design in Venice reflected Dalmatian developments in the period preceeding the Frari stalls, providing precedents for the canopies and plain backing.

The Frari canopies were also stylistically similar to contemporary wooden altarpiece

<sup>38</sup>The authorship of the Santo Stefano stalls is in doubt because they are signed by ‘Marco da Vicenza’ but documents refer to Leonardo Scalamanzo, who Schulz thinks should be considered the main artist. Markham Schulz (2008), pp. 656–663.

<sup>39</sup>Petricioli (1975), pp. 113–118. Giuseppe Maria Pilo, *The Fruitful Impact. The Venetian heritage in the art of Dalmatia*, 2nd (Mariano del Friuli: Edizioni della Laguna, 2005), pp. 70–71.

<sup>40</sup>Pilo (2005), pp. 16–17.

<sup>41</sup>According to Babić, the stall were commissioned from Master Ivan Budislavic in 1439. Babić (1990), p. 60.

<sup>42</sup>For example, the sacristy cupboard in Trogir Cathedral, dated to 1458, can be attributed on stylistic grounds to the same artist who carved the large tracery panel currently in the Frari.

frames. Comparable concave gables filled with tracery bosses appeared in mid fifteenth-century altarpiece frames in Venice, such as the frame for the San Zaccaria altarpiece by Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Ludovico da Forlì of 1443-4 (Fig. 176). In the Frari itself, the canopies of the 1474 *St Mark altarpiece* by Bartolomeo Vivarini display similar concave gables, traceried bosses and are crowned with busts of prophets holding scrolls, a motif which would appear on the Santo Stefano stalls (Fig. 227). Despite being constructed six years later than the stalls, the *St Mark altarpiece* exhibits that similar design sensibilities were employed for contemporary wooden frames.

Twisted columns flanking the stall-backs in the Frari were an unusual feature for this date, but were employed in the fourteenth century in San Fermo in Verona and Verona Cathedral. Twisted columns also appear in stalls in Piedmont, including the Abbazia della Novalesa (now in Sant'Ippolito in Bardonecchia), San Francesco in Alba (now in San Giovanni in Alba) and the Collegiata in Chieri.<sup>43</sup> The same motif was used in the Dalmatian stalls of Zadar and Rab. In Venice, the device was commonly used in frame design, seen in the San Zaccaria high altarpiece. Twisted columns also featured in metalwork, exhibited in the treasury of the Santo in Padua, for example in the reliquary of a bone of St Stephen and of the cross of St Andrew from the fifth decade of the fifteenth century (Fig. 228),<sup>44</sup> and the reliquary of the stone of the Holy Sepulchre, clothing of Christ and relics of the Holy Innocents from the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

Venetian stalls by the Cozzi workshop feature dense ajouré carved stall-dividers, referred to in the 1455 San Zaccaria contract as *erte*. Three designs alternate regularly amongst the Frari stalls: two barely indistinguishable foliate forms and one containing a distinctive rose motif in the upper volute. Similar carving can be seen in the seating around the throne of the altarpiece *Madonna with Saints Gregory, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine* by Antonio Vivarini and Giovanni d'Alemagna in 1446, in the Accademia, Venice. A serpentine shape in the florid carving of the altarpiece throne creates a similar effect to the carving in the Frari. Contemporary stalls by the Canozi brothers and their followers, for example at Santa

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<sup>43</sup>Romano (2002), pp. 35–42, 94–103, 147–155.

<sup>44</sup>The reliquary depicts saints Stephen and Andrew grasping twisted columns to either side of the architectural structure. Marco Collareta, Giordana Mariani Canova and Anna Maria Spiazzi, *Basilica del Santo. Le oreficerie* (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1995), 118–120, cat. 29.

<sup>45</sup>In a highly inventive piece of micro-architecture, twisted columns link the upper and lower sections of the reliquary. Collareta, Canova and Spiazzi (1995), pp. 121–122, cat. 30.

Corona in Vicenza and Santa Giustina in Padua, tend to have less carving in this area, giving an effect of horizontality along the row of stalls. In the Frari, increased decoration of the stall-dividers gives the impression of each stall as a separate entity, emphasising the verticality of the stalls.

Intarsia *a toppo* panels showing architectural and interior scenes in perspective are situated beneath the carvings of saints on the choir stalls (Fig. 229). In the fifty stalls eight different scenes were repeated in no particular order, while a single unique panel of a centralised courtyard was displayed on the first stall on the south side, liturgically the most important seat. Scenes include medieval buildings with crenellations, a hexagonal church building and an interior with a well. Each of the eight different scenes was repeated between three and ten times throughout the complex.<sup>46</sup> In choir-stall design of the fifteenth century, it was relatively unusual to repeat scenes on the upper stall-backs. In most major choir precincts such as the Canozzi works at Modena Cathedral and Parma Cathedral, each panel was a unique design, constructed using the figurative intarsia technique. Indeed, Colazio particularly praised Lorenzo Canozzi's choir at the Santo in Padua because of its variety.

Some of the Frari scenes show signs of discontinuity between the upper and lower parts of the panel, suggesting that they have been dismantled and reassembled (Fig. 230).<sup>47</sup> However, the recent restoration report reveals that all the designs are original.<sup>48</sup> Intarsia *a toppo* panels were by their nature, prefabricated, and produced repeating scenes. Almost identical scenes on two *cassoni* now in the Bode Museum in Berlin show the wide use of similar cartoons and techniques. Four of the 'well' scenes appear on one of the *cassone* (Fig. 231) and a series of water troughs on the other (Fig. 232), both motifs used in the Frari.<sup>49</sup> The decorative intarsia *a toppo* strips and intarsia *a buio* on the *cassoni* also parallel the Venetian stalls. The *cassoni* were given a Florentine provenance by Schottmüller,

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<sup>46</sup>The water trough scene appears ten times in the stalls, the hexagonal church scene six times, the well scene nine times, the centralised building scene seven times, the centralised courtyard scene six times, the street scene five times, the building with an opening to the right three times, and the building with an opening to the left three times.

<sup>47</sup>For example, stalls N9, N10, N12.

<sup>48</sup>Capovilla Pruneri (2002). Album 397/A contains diagrams of each stall with the replaced elements highlighted. None of the intarsia panels have had significant replacements, but some individual tesserae have been lost.

<sup>49</sup>Schottmüller (1928), 44, 45, figs. 98, 100.

suggesting that a workshop in Florence specialised in the production of such panels.<sup>50</sup> A *cassone* in the Museo Horne in Florence decorated with two rectangular intarsia panels each with four wells amid crenellated architecture, also has a close affinity with the Frari panels. It has been given a Tuscan provenance by Pignatti, again revealing Florence as a centre for intarsia *a toppo* production.<sup>51</sup> As the birthplace of the perspective intarsia technique in the Sagrestia della Messe of Florence Cathedral in the 1430s, Florence was well known for its woodworkers and in 1472 Benedetto Dei noted that there were eighty-four intarsia workshops in the city.<sup>52</sup>

Close parallels can also be made between the Frari panels and a sacristy door in Sant'Anastasia in Verona (Fig. 233). The sacristy was constructed in 1453 by the Giusti family, which enables a rough dating of the door to the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>53</sup> The door panels are the same size as those in the Frari (225mm square)<sup>54</sup> and show some of the same images, such as the chair and the water trough. As they are the same size, these *a toppo* panels were prefabricated before being inserted into the door framework, possibly by the Cozzi workshop.

In the church of Santi Nazaro e Celso in Verona, a sacristy cupboard dating to the second half of the fifteenth century is decorated with intarsia panels on the doors and *spalliere*. Although the door panels are smaller than those in the Frari stalls, they show extraordinarily similar motifs, such as fonts and crenellated castles (Fig. 234).<sup>55</sup> The Veronese examples place the construction of such *a toppo* panels firmly in the Veneto, showing that the Frari intarsias did not necessarily originate in Florence. The identical motifs used in Venice, Verona and Florence perhaps reveal the use of model books rather than a centralised place of production.

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<sup>50</sup>Schottmüller (1928), p. 242. Schottmüller noted that two similar *cassoni* are in the Liebigshaus in Frankfurt and Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Unfortunately the present author has not found images of these pieces.

<sup>51</sup>The frames of intarsia *a toppo* in the form of eight-pointed stars resemble designs also seen in the Frari stalls. See illustration in Terisio Pignatti, *Mobili italiani del Rinascimento* (Milan: Antonio Vallardi Editore, 1961), p. 35.

<sup>52</sup>Cecchi (1999), p. 215: 'Florentie bella à 66 botteghe di speziali e à 84 botteghe di legnaiuoli di tarssie e 'intagl[i]atori e à 54 botteghe di pietre chonci fra di marmmi e macinghi e mastri d'intagl[i]atori e rilievo e 1/2 rilievo e fogliami e traffori, drento alla città in tutta perfezione.'

<sup>53</sup>Rognini (1994), p. 26. Rognini does not think that the same artist did both the door and the choir stalls in Sant'Anastasia.

<sup>54</sup>Many of the Frari panels are square in shape (225mm square) but additional strips of intarsia have been added to make them rectangular.

<sup>55</sup>The panels measure 165mm square.



The stipulations for the later Spilimbergo contract indicate that Marco Cozzi himself produced the intarsia *a toppo* panels for the Frari choir. In this contract, Cozzi had to supply at his own expense the small pieces of wood needed for intarsia—‘ad tarsiam pertinentia’.<sup>56</sup> Given their familial likeness to those in Spilimbergo it is likely that Cozzi also produced the Frari panels. However, they were probably made in batches off site before being inserted in their present haphazard formation.

The extensive use of intarsia *a toppo* strips also shows the tendency of the Cozzi workshop to use prefabricated pieces. Intarsia patterns surround the saints and perspective panels on the stall-backs in the Frari, and substall seat-backs and desks. Intarsia *a toppo* was by its very nature prefabricated, and there were specialist workshops which produced sections of pattern in bulk. The fact that Lorenzo Canozi came to Venice to buy wood shows that the city was a centre for the purchase of materials, which could have included intarsia *a toppo* possibly imported from Florence.<sup>57</sup>

Refined intarsia *a buio* decoration appears at the four terminal stall-ends (Fig. 235). Intarsia *a buio* or *commesso di silio* involved inlaying a linear pattern of light coloured wood, normally spindlewood, into a darker wood.<sup>58</sup> Vines in vases appear on the stall-ends N1 and S25, and carnations in vases on S1 and N25. This eucharistic imagery would have been seen by the friars as they entered and exited the stalls and as they went to the altar to receive communion. The eucharistic theme was also used for the frames of the carved panels of saints, where energetic vines spring from vases on the lower edges. In a further reference to communion, a relief of the wounded Christ occupies first the stall-back on the south—the liturgically most prominent position—next to St Francis who, turning to Christ, displays his own stigmata (Fig. 236).

Intense eucharistic devotion in the Frari was also manifested in images and cults in the church. A thirteenth-century *Man of Sorrows* polychrome marble relief is situated on the pier between the first and second chapels to the south of the high altar (Fig. 237). The value of the relief is shown both by its proximity to the inscription recording the consecration of the church and that it was probably kept from the demolished thirteenth-

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<sup>56</sup>Contract dated 4 February 1475, transcribed in Joppi (1887), p. 111: ‘Omnia vero alia lignamina minuta et ad tarsiam pertinentia’.

<sup>57</sup>See footnote 85.

<sup>58</sup>Wilmering (1999), pp. 73–79.

century building.<sup>59</sup> Above the crossing bay a boss of the *Man of Sorrows* further shows the emphasis placed on the cult, particularly focused on the area between the choir and the high altar (Fig. 238). A thirteenth-century wooden painted crucifix also originating from the old church was located in the second chapel to the right in the nave, which became known as the ‘cappella del Crocifisso’ at least by 1489.<sup>60</sup> The crucifix, which was believed to have miraculous powers, attracted popular devotion and *ex voto* offerings.<sup>61</sup> Shortly after the choir stalls were completed, eucharistic devotion in the Frari was intensified by the donation of the relic of the Holy Blood from Constantinople by Melchior Trevisan in 1479.<sup>62</sup> Situated between the crucifix on the screen and the high altar, the eucharistic imagery on the choir stalls meant that they were symbolically integrated with both structures, emphasising the cult of the body of Christ beloved of Franciscans.

The Frari stalls are an amalgam of diverse elements which combine to create a powerful visual spectacle. From the rich carving of the stall dividers and canopies to the intarsia scenes and reliefs of saints, each element was intended to impress the viewer, reminding them not only of the religious devotion of the Franciscans but the high cost of the furniture.

### 6.3 Choir stalls in the Frari and in the Santo, Padua

The rich ornamentation and immense size of the Frari choir stalls reflects the high status of the church, home to the premier Franciscan community in Venice.<sup>63</sup> The commission of such impressive stalls was associated with the head of the Franciscan community in the Veneto at Santo’Antonio in Padua. Choir stalls in the Santo were commissioned in 1462 to Lorenzo Canozi, who (together with his brother Cristoforo) had completed the choir stalls in Modena Cathedral with highly refined intarsia perspective panels.<sup>64</sup>

Venetian interest in the Santo’s choir stalls is revealed in various letters sent from the Santo to Venice in March 1463, which document a request that some stalls be sent to Venice. The letters themselves do not survive, but payments for the letters were

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<sup>59</sup>Gatti (1992), p. 137.

<sup>60</sup>In a visit to the Frari in January 1489, the Minister General Francesco Sansone referred to the chapel as ‘capella Crucifixi.’ Gatti (1992), p. 135.

<sup>61</sup>Gatti (1992), p. 135.

<sup>62</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1803.

<sup>63</sup>The stalls are 4.5m high, and the precinct is 15.68m in length and 12.44m wide.

<sup>64</sup>The contract for the Santo choir stalls is transcribed in Sartori (1961), pp. 25–26.

listed in the account book of the ‘*Arca*’, the administrative committee at the Santo which oversaw artistic commissions. Since 1396 the *Arca* committee had always consisted of four Paduan citizens, usually from elite families, and two Franciscan friars from the convent of Sant’Antonio.<sup>65</sup> Payments for the letters appear interspersed amongst expenses for the new choir stalls, directly following a payment to Lorenzo Canozi for some cheese glue. The first note referring to the Venetian communications is a payment dated 17 March for a letter to ambassadors of the Franciscan community in Venice (‘la nostra Comunità a Venexia’).<sup>66</sup> These ambassadors had to appear before the Venetian Signoria to explain that the two finished seats would not go to Venice, despite the request made by Jacopo Morosini.

The second payment in the *Arca* account book was to the chancellor of the Paduan Podestà, Zaccaria Trevisan, for a reply to the ducal letters (‘lettere ducale’) from the Signoria that had requested that the seats go to Venice.<sup>67</sup> As this entry is dated the following day, it would seem that the Signoria were not pleased with the Venetian friars’ news, and had written a letter to the Podestà, perhaps in an attempt to supercede the *Arca*’s jurisdiction. A third payment dated 18 March 1463 notes that Friar Antonio Buxenelo had gone to the Venice Signoria with the letters described above accompanied by the Venetian ambassadors.<sup>68</sup> A document now in the Archivio di Stato in Padua records the same event, providing a reason why the stalls could not be taken to Venice: ‘that they cannot be transferred there without a great disturbance to them, therefore it will be better to show them in Padua, because the scandal which could rise up in the city of Padua must be avoided.’<sup>69</sup>

Between the second and third entries concerning the Venetian affair in the *Arca* account,

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<sup>65</sup>Geraldine A. Johnson, ‘Approaching the Altar: Donatello’s Sculpture in the Santo’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1999), p. 634.

<sup>66</sup>Padua, Basilica del Santo, Archivio dell’*Arca* (hereafter AdA), Reg. 344, fol. 19r. Transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 28: ‘Ave Ser Iorolimo da utilia per una letera comesa da li Deputadi a utilia a li inbasadori de la nostra comunità a Venexia, che è miss. Corà da Montereale e miss. Iacomo dal Sole, che dovese comparere a la Signoria a defendere che le sedie non andasse a Venexia, per la interzesion fata per miss. Iacomo Moresin, e per le copie di lettere introchiuxe a la ditta letera’.

<sup>67</sup>AdA, Reg. 344, fol. 19r. Transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 28: ‘Ave Ser Zuandomenego Spazarin, canzeliere del Podestà, per la risposta fexe miss. Zacharia Trivizan, Podestà, ale lettere ducale de la Signoria che era vegnude che le sedie andase a Venexia, e per copie de quele lettere duplicà, che xè apresso miss. Daniele’.

<sup>68</sup>AdA, reg. 344, fol. 19r. Transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 28: ‘Ave Miss. Fra Antonio Buxenelo, per andare a Venexia con le lettere sopra el fato de le sedie che non andasse a Venexia e per esser con il inbasadori de la comunità a la Signoria, fo prexente Fra Matio guardian’.

<sup>69</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 28: ‘quae non possunt sine magno illorum incomodo isthinc transferri, quare melius esset, ob evitanda scandalla quae in civitate Paduae oriri possent, melius et comodius hic Paduae videri’.

a payment recorded the transfer of a few finished stalls to the chapel of Gattamelata in the Santo.<sup>70</sup> They were to be put on display in this chapel together with a drawing of the proposed choir complex, and must have been the same finished stalls that the Venetians had requested. Perhaps the exhibition scheme was intended to reiterate the vital importance of the furniture remaining in Padua.

These documents from March 1463 are fascinating both for the sense of rivalry they suggest, and for the different authorities, both secular and religious, involved in the dispute. The Venetian request seems to have been a joint venture by the Franciscan friars and the Signoria, facilitated by Jacopo Morosini. As their supplication was rejected by the *Arca* of the Santo, they appealed to the Paduan Podestà, who also refused. Finally, a Franciscan friar from Padua accompanied the letters to Venice to ensure the affair was resolved. Although these documents have been published in relation to the Santo stalls, they have not been considered in the literature, sparse though it is, of the Frari stalls.

It seems that Jacopo Morosini, later to be procurator of the Frari and patron of the slightly later marble choir screen, had a particular interest in displaying the Santo's stalls in Venice.<sup>71</sup> As Morosini was so closely associated with the Frari, it is highly likely that he wanted the stalls to go to the Franciscan church, although this is not explicitly stated in the letters. Little is known about Morosini; even his social status or employment is a mystery, despite his prominent inscription on the Frari choir screen.<sup>72</sup> It is also unclear precisely when Morosini became procurator of the Frari, as Giovanni di Chioggia was documented as having this role between 1472 and 1474, while Leonardo Pelacan held the title in 1475.<sup>73</sup> Procurators were laymen who were appointed to manage the legal and business affairs of the convent, and were usually local wealthy men.<sup>74</sup> Morosini was certainly procurator in 1476, as witnessed in the document ceding the left wall of the *cappella maggiore* to the Tron

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<sup>70</sup>AdA, Reg. 344, fol. 19r: 'per portare le sedie fate in mostra in la capela di Gatamelada'.

<sup>71</sup>An inscription along the cornice of the Frari choir screen reads: OPTIME IACOBO MAUROCENO PROCURANTE HIS SEDIB[US] HAEC MARMORA SUNT ADIUNCTA.

<sup>72</sup>The testaments and inventories in the Archivio di Stato in Venice do not record Jacopo Morosini, and there is no mention of his tomb in the Frari archive. His son Vittore was present at the signing of the agreement of 8 July 1516 between the Frari and San Rocco (discussed below): 'presente Magnifico D. Vittore Mauroceno q. magnifici dni Iacobi similiter procuratore dictae ecclesiae'. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1865.

<sup>73</sup>Giovanni di Chioggia was named as procurator of the Frari in two documents dated 6 March 1472 and 23 April 1474. A document dated 27 November 1475 named Leonardo Pelacan as procurator. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, pp. 1771–72.

<sup>74</sup>Papi defined a procurator as 'a person who manages the affairs of another by virtue of a charge received by him.' Hector Papi, 'Procurator', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (New York: Appleton, 1911).

mausoleum, which also noted that he lived in the parish of San Polo, near the Frari.<sup>75</sup> The Morosini family were part of the ancient Venetian elite, and Jacopo was closely associated with Doge Cristoforo Moro, acting as an executor of his will in 1470.<sup>76</sup>

It is unclear why Morosini and the Signoria wanted the stalls to be displayed in Venice. Perhaps they were to serve as a model or exemplar for the craftsman Marco Cozzi; to show the friars what their choir stalls might eventually look like; or to encourage lay donations. Morosini appears to have had a close involvement with the Frari choir from an early date, suggesting that he provided some or all of the funds needed to commission such expensive furniture. No documents survive related to the stalls, but his communication with the Santo and patronage of the later Frari choir screen support this hypothesis.

The affair highlights the value placed on church furniture in this period. Choir stalls were not just utilitarian objects but were costly status symbols and a source of civic pride for religious and secular authorities. Even though the two stalls were not in the end transported to Venice, the two contemporary sets of Franciscan choirs in Padua and Venice seem to have had a close relationship.

Although the Santo choir is almost completely lost, stylistic aspects of the Frari choir stalls are attributable to the influence of the Paduan stalls (Fig. 239).<sup>77</sup> The Cozzi's first stalls in Venice at San Zaccaria, display designs of knotted intarsia on the stall-backs, carved foliate stall-dividers, shell niches and a carved cornice. By the time they were working in the Frari, the Cozzi repertoire included twisted columns either side of the stall-back, perspectival intarsia *a toppo* scenes, reliefs of saints, and a canopy level of Gothic arches and tracery, angels and a plain wooden backing. The contract of 1462 between the craftsmen Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozi and the *Arca* specified various features of the choir stalls, including foliate stall-ends ('capitelus').

Which stalls must be worked from good wood with foliate stall-ends with  
tracery and with tarsia having perspective, varnished in suitable places, in

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<sup>75</sup>Document dated 17 April 1476. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1802: 'generosum dominum Jacobum Maurocenum, quondam magnifici domini victoris de confinio sancti Pauli procuratorem ecclesiae Beatissimae Virginis Marie fratrum minorum de Venetiis'.

<sup>76</sup>Cicogna (1861), p. 728: 'commissarii . . . jacomo morexini fo de et vetor et domenego morexini'.

<sup>77</sup>The two surviving intarsia panels were taken from the choir in 1652 and inserted into confessionals designed in a Gothic style by architect Lorenzo Bedogni, who also supervised the resystemisation of choir. Bagatin (1990), p. 73. As the confessionals display Gothic motifs, out of fashion in the mid-seventeenth century, they could reflect carving on the original fifteenth-century stalls.

which ten half-length [lit. from the middle up] figures of saints must be made in human form according to the wish of the Domini Deputati.<sup>78</sup>

In a later description by Valerio Polidoro in his *Delle Religiose Memorie della chiesa di S. Antonio in Padova*, published in Venice in 1590, further features link the stalls with those in the Frari, particularly the canopy level.

Their material is walnut wood, that has white intarsia, of such excellence, representing different forms. They have however carving in the divisions, that join the compartments one with another, which ascend with most gracious turns of foliage, until the very highest have distinct canopies, made in the shape of pyramids, of the same carving, that through their ornament many gold stars shine in celestial colour; with a similar making in the highest part, that is towards the centre of the choir, it creates all around a beautiful perspective, finished in the very highest part with a cornice of gilded balls; while the lowest, where they get up, they have given complete comfort and support to those who are seated.<sup>79</sup>

Foliate stall-dividers and architectural canopies seem similar to Frari stalls and the ‘corso continuo’ could refer to a small frieze or the plain wooden backing behind the canopies. Two surviving panels from the Santo choir stalls, removed when the choir was transported behind the high altar in 1652, were converted into confessionals (Fig. 239).<sup>80</sup> It is unclear however whether the canopy and columns of the confessionals imitate the original choir stall decoration or were later additions. The increased prominence of perspectival scenes on the Frari stalls could be attributed to the influence of the Santo stalls, which displayed

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<sup>78</sup>Transcribed in Sartori (1961), p. 25: ‘Qui stalli debeant esse laborati de bono lignamine cum foleis capitulis cum suis strafforis et cum tarsiis habentibus prospectivam, invernizati in locis condecantibus, in quibus debeant facere decem figuras sanctorum ad formam humanam a medio sursum secundum voluntatem dominorum tunc deputatorum.’

<sup>79</sup>Polidoro, *Delle religiose memorie della chiesa di S. Antonio di Padova* (Venice 1590) 10r–v, transcribed in Bagatin (1990), p. 70: ‘La materia loro è di legno di noci, che riceve bianca intersia (sic), di tale eccellenza, che non paiono sedie di diverso legno variate, ma di pittura di mano dotta, ben figurate, mentre diverse forme rappresentano. Hanno però d’intaglio deli spartimenti, che congiungono l’uno con l’altro gli appartamenti, i quali ascendono a fogliami con gratiosissimi giri, fin là ove le più alte hanno distino coperto, fatto à Piramidi, del medesimo intaglio, che per suo ornamento fa risplendere, in colore celestino, molte stelle d’oro; il simile facendo nella parte più alta, che verso il mezo del Choro, d’ogn’intorno fa bella prospettiva, terminata nella più alta parte da un corso continuo di palle dorate; mentre le più basse, ivi restano di salire, ove hanno dato compitamente comodo, et appoggio a chi ricevono.’

<sup>80</sup>The two intarsia panels show a ruined archway and a view of the Santo itself. Bagatin (2004), p. 212.

large intarsia panels showing a variety of architectural scenes. The ‘pyramidal’ canopies in the Santo choir could have been similar to the Gothic concave gables in the upper parts of the Frari choir. Gothic pyramidal canopies also featured in stalls of the Upper Church at Assisi, showing a visual continuity between three of the largest Franciscan communities in Italy (Fig. 240). The Assisi choir was completed by the workshop of Domenico Indivini da San Severino between 1491 and 1501, and features intarsia panels of saints, beati and famous Franciscans and cupboard interiors.<sup>81</sup> Shell-niche canopies are crowned with gables filled with carved roundels, divided by pinnacles, providing further links with the Frari stalls.

Images of saints featured prominently in both the Santo and Frari choir stalls. The Santo contract requested ten intarsia images of saints, to be chosen by the *Arca*. Matteo Colazio, who wrote a description of the stalls around 1475, mentioned the Virgin annunciate, the Virgin misericordia, Prosdocimus and the angel Gabriel, while Polidoro also mentioned S. Louis of Toulouse.<sup>82</sup> Sartori has suggested that the remaining saints were Christ the Redeemer, Francis, Anthony, Clare and Louis IX.<sup>83</sup> Although the Frari stalls have an increased number of saints carved in a German style, at least one was in the same position as in the Santo. Polidoro noted: ‘The third compartment of the highest row on the left side, from the principal entrance of the Choir, has within it an effigy of Saint Louis Bishop.’<sup>84</sup> In the Frari stalls, the carved image of S. Louis of Toulouse is in the same position—third on the left from the entrance—perhaps indicating that other saints were in the same positions as in the Santo.

Decorative aspects in the Santo stalls as described in written sources—the pyramidal canopies, tracery and plain backing—are atypical to surviving Canozi stalls, which tend to feature refined intarsia panels within a simple architectural structure. Canozi stalls in Modena and Parma Cathedrals, completed in 1465 and 1473 respectively, have intarsia panels in the lower and upper parts of the stalls surmounted by a simple cornice with

<sup>81</sup>Bonsanti (2002), Text volume, pp. 608–19.

<sup>82</sup>Colazio’s description was printed in Venice in 1486 as ‘Laus perspectivae’ as part of ‘De verbo civilitate’, but was probably written around 1475. See Appendix B.1, p. 289. See also Valerio Polidoro’s description of the Santo choir, from *Delle religiose memorie della chiesa di S. Antonio di Padova*, Venice (1590), transcribed in Appendix B.9 on p. 310.

<sup>83</sup>Sartori (1961), p. 44.

<sup>84</sup>Quoted in Bagatin (1990), p. 70: ‘Il terzo appartamento dell’ordine più alto dal lato sinistro, nell’entrata principale del Choro, ha dentro effigiato S. Lodovico vescovo’.

restrained foliate carving between the stalls. This suggests that the Frari stalls actually provided a Venetian influence to the Canozi repertoire. The two Santo stalls were not eventually transported to Venice, but Lorenzo Canozi certainly visited the Serenissima on at least one occasion. A payment recorded in 1462 for various items such as varnish and glue for the making of the choir, includes a payment to Lorenzo ‘for his expenses [because] he went to Venice to buy said items’.<sup>85</sup>

If there was competition between the Frari and the Santo, the Frari seemed to get the upper hand, completing their stalls a year earlier in 1468. With 124 seats in three levels, the Frari choir complex is the largest Franciscan choir in Italy, outstripping the ninety seats in the Santo and 102 in the Upper Church at Assisi. This impressive scale could partly be explained by the Frari’s hosting of the General Chapter of the Franciscan Order in May 1469, just one year after the completion of the stalls. The friars would have known about the chapter in advance, giving them time to prepare the church and convent. The Chapter was a significant event for the Venetian convent, with between 2500 and 3000 friars attending from all over Europe, a thousand more than generally attended.<sup>86</sup>

In the election for the General leader of the order, three ‘vocali’ were nominated from each of the forty-five provinces, nearly all of whom could have sat in the Frari’s choir stalls. The importance to Venice of this event was manifested in a text, known as the *Orazione della Immacolata*, written and delivered by one of the Venetian friars, in which Venice was praised for its commitment to religion, shown especially in the war against the Turks: ‘for when the Christian faith and the Church of God were violently attacked, with the highest expense, greatest preparation, and virtuous men, she [Venice] conquered that emperor who had persecuted the supreme pope’.<sup>87</sup> Venice’s financial commitment must have seemed particularly pertinent to those friars sitting in what must have been amongst the most expensive seats of their time.

<sup>85</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 257: ‘28 Sep 1462. Ave maestro Lorenzo, maestro a lo lavoro del coro, per libre 6 onze 9 verzi [varnish], L. 10.8, e per libre 14 onze 3 sandalli [sandal wood] L. 10.18, e per libre 10 cola garavela [glue] L. 2, e per cola de pesse [fish glue] fo libre 8 costa L. 6.8, e per busso [box wood] costa L. 1, in tutto, 30.14. Item ave el dito, per sue spexe che luy ando a Venexia a comprare dite cose, L. 2.10.’

<sup>86</sup>Lorenzo di Fonzo, ‘Sisto IV. Carriera scolastica e integrazioni biografiche (1414–84)’, *Miscellanea Francescana* 86 (1986), p. 353.

<sup>87</sup>Francesco della Rovere, *L’Orazione della Immacolata*, ed. by Dino Cortese (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1985), pp. 44–45: ‘Nam cum vexaretur vehementer christiana fides et ecclesia Dei et Imperatorem illum summi pontificis persecutorem summo sumptu maximo apparatu integerrimis viribus superavit’.



## 6.4 Saints and altars

The fifty carvings of saints on the Frari stalls have been the subject of two articles by Gertrud Otto and J. A. Schmoll gen. Eisenworth in 1937 and 1958 respectively (Fig. 244). Otto attributed the reliefs to a worker from the Strasbourg region, and likened the facial style, especially the long nose and small mouth and chin, to that of Nikolaus Gerhaert.<sup>88</sup> Schmoll made the same attribution, and suggested that the inscription of 1468 only referred to the completed intarsia work, with the reliefs being added later.<sup>89</sup> Schmoll does not have any evidence for this later dating and it seems part of his attempt to link the Venetian stalls with those in Isenheim, completed in 1493.<sup>90</sup>

A technical assessment shows that the Frari reliefs were carved as separate panels and then inserted into the stall-back framework, but this does not suggest that they were added later than the inscription of 1468.<sup>91</sup> However, it does allow for the possibility that the German carver did not produce the reliefs in Venice. Not all of the reliefs in the Frari were carved by the same German master: figures in positions N13, N18, S13 and S18 seem to have a more Italianate quality, having wider noses, fuller lips, chubbier hands and Italian dress.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps some panels by the German carver became damaged, requiring further reliefs to be completed by a local sculptor.<sup>93</sup> However, Cozzi's commitment to symmetry is shown by the placing of the four 'Italian' saints opposite each other.

The prominent presence of German carving in the Frari stalls could have influenced the development of Venetian art in this period, perhaps even inspiring woodcarving by Bartolomeo Vivarini.<sup>94</sup> The German master who completed the Frari reliefs seems to have

<sup>88</sup>Gertrud Otto (1937), p. 174.

<sup>89</sup>Eisenwerth (1958), p. 270.

<sup>90</sup>Eisenwerth (1958), p. 274.

<sup>91</sup>This technique was used in the Rhine area for the construction of altars and was employed in the choir of the Collegiata di Sant'Orso in Aosta, an area greatly influenced by northern-European art. The carvings of saints at Sant'Orso were influenced by engravings by Schongauer and attached to the stall-back via a system of joints. Anna La Ferla, 'I cori della Cattedrale e di Sant'Orso ad Aosta', in Romano (2002), pp. 230–1.

<sup>92</sup>Schmoll identifies stalls N18, S7 and S19 as having Italianate reliefs, with S9 and S10 being carved by a helper of the Strasbourg Frari Meister. Eisenwerth (1958), p. 269. I would argue that S7 is a hybrid of the two styles, with Italian facial features combined with distinctive German hands. S19 has the same long fingers, dress and facial expression of other reliefs attributed to the Frari Meister.

<sup>93</sup>In the 1477 choir of Asti Cathedral some reliefs on the stall-backs were carved by the Italian Baldino da Surso, while others were completed by a Swiss or German master. Those done by Baldino however were placed on the liturgically more important stalls. Romano (2002), pp. 108, 112.

<sup>94</sup>Pallucchini has suggested that Bartolomeo Vivarini could have been inspired by the Frari reliefs (which he would have undoubtedly known, given he worked at the church in 1474) to incorporate a northern-style Pietà relief in his Rab altarpiece, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Rodolfo Pallucchini, *I*

also executed a wooden altarpiece for an unknown location in Venice, currently in the museum attached to Santo Stefano. Two large figures of saints Andrew and Jerome survive and have been attributed to the carver of the Frari saints (Fig. 241).<sup>95</sup> St Andrew, with his long nose, heavy eyelids and long wavy beard recalls some of the male saints in the Frari, most notably on stalls N11 and S8, the latter also depicting St Andrew. Müller has also detected the continuation of the Frari-Meister's work in a Venetian altarpiece in the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, and a German carved relief of the Virgin and Child in a German private collection, originally intended for a Venetian patron.<sup>96</sup> Both sculptures show similar facial features to the Frari reliefs such as the elongated nose and small mouth, and long wavy hair.

Of the fifty saints portrayed on the Frari stalls, some are paired together and others refer to cults and altars in the church. On the return stalls, the first saints are arranged in neat pairings: the Man of Sorrows with the risen Christ; Francis and the Madonna and Child; Franciscan saints Anthony of Padua and Louis of Toulouse in the third pairing; and Zachariah and his son John the Baptist in the fourth stalls. Some of the pairings work alongside each other: for example Francis displays his stigmata to the neighbouring Man of Sorrows.

The saints also reflect relics held by the Frari and the placement of altars in the church (Fig. 242). Starting from the entrance to the stalls, the Man of Sorrows is situated on the first stall on the south side (S1), on the same side of the church as the chapel of the Crucifix as recorded in the 1581 Apostolic Visitation.<sup>97</sup> Opposite, the stall N2 is occupied by the Madonna and child, on the same side of the church as the chapel dedicated to the Madonna delle Neve to the left of the *cappella maggiore*, and reflecting the Virgin's position on the choir screen. John the Baptist, also on the north side, recalls his position

*Vivarini* (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1962), p. 79.

<sup>95</sup>The label in the museum reads: 'Intagliatore strasburghese. Seconda metà del XV. sec... The two works were probably part of a polyptych whose central figure is now missing. Stylistic analysis indicates a probable kinship with the Strasbourg artist who executed a number of bas-reliefs of the wood-carved chorus in the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta dei Frari.'

<sup>96</sup>Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, J. P. Morgan Collection, 17.228. Theodor Müller, 'A Venetian Altarpiece in Hartford', *The Art Quarterly* 17 (1954), pp. 365–69, figg. 1, 3.

<sup>97</sup>The altar of the Crucifix is listed after the altar dedicated to St Anthony, presumably referring to the altar of the Scuola di Sant'Antonio on the south side of the main entrance. It is likely that the altars were listed in order, also locating the altar of the Crucifix on the south side. Remigio Ritzler, 'Gli atti della visita apostolica del 1581 ai conventi di S. Maria Gloriosa e di S. Nicoletto dei Frati Minori conventuali in Venezia', *Miscellanea Francescana* 69 (1969), p. 169.

on the choir screen, and the two chapels dedicated to him; the Scuola dei Milanesi chapel third to the left of the *cappella maggiore* (also dedicated to St Ambrose),<sup>98</sup> and the Scuola dei Fiorentini,<sup>99</sup> left of the main entrance.

The chapel to the right of the main entrance, ceded to the Scuola di Sant'Antonio in 1441, corresponds to the placement of St Anthony on the south side of the choir stalls.<sup>100</sup> Again on the south side of the choir stalls, images of St Francis and St Jerome could refer to chapels on the same side of the church, recorded in the 1581 visitation.<sup>101</sup> On the north side of the stalls, carvings of the archangel Michael and St Ambrose are on the same side of the church as chapels dedicated to them, ceded to the Scuola dei Bocaleri and Scuola dei Milanesi respectively.

St George appears on the north terminal stall, his importance perhaps correlating with his presence on the reverse of the magnificently decorated fifteenth-century processional cross.<sup>102</sup> Not all of the saints depicted on the stalls align with positions of chapels in the church, and except for the return stalls the order seems to be relatively haphazard. However, later choirs made by the Cozzi workshop at Spilimbergo Cathedral and Santo Stefano in Venice form a similar relationship between images of saints on the stalls and altar dedications in the church, suggesting that such a correlation was a real consideration in the planning of the choir decoration at least for some important iconography.<sup>103</sup>

As in the Frari stalls, the Spilimbergo stalls have carved reliefs of saints on the stall-backs, which were not, however, mentioned in the contract (Fig. 243). Presumably, as in the Santo, the decision was left to the clergy or administrative body of the church. Many of the saints shown had cults associated with the church, and some saints, including Francis, Lucy, John the Baptist and Anthony Abbot, were depicted in frescoes on the same side of the church and in the same order as their wooden representations, suggesting an intended relationship between the different media. Frescoes of Francis and John the

<sup>98</sup>This chapel was consecrated on 24 June 1421 to saints John the Baptist and Ambrose. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1877.

<sup>99</sup>The chapel was ceded to the scuola on 7 August 1443. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1887.

<sup>100</sup>For the concession see Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1843.

<sup>101</sup>Ritzler (1969), p. 169.

<sup>102</sup>Piero Pazzi, *Leoreficerie gotiche e rinascimentali del tesoro della Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari* (Venice 1976), p. 44.

<sup>103</sup>In the Certosa di Pavia, intarsia stall-backs also had a direct relationship with surrounding fresco cycles both in terms of iconography and style; some of the intarsia cartoons might have been designed by painters working on the frescoes in the 1480s and 1490s. Battaglia (1997), pp. 128–30.

Baptist appear on the north wall, while the depiction of Anthony Abbot is on the north side of the west wall, and Lucy is on the north pier of the third bay.<sup>104</sup> It is likely that the saints portrayed in frescoes were the sites of altars or chapels in the church. The saints on the stalls were not carved in the striking German style seen in the Frari, as a comparison between two portrayals of St Catherine shows (Figg. 244, 245). In Spilimbergo, the addition of a halo and book, together with the altered clothing and pose, create a slightly awkward, apologetic version of the saint in the Frari.

Reconstructing the positions of choir images and altar dedications gives us an insight into the arrangement of the half-length reliefs of saints on the Frari stalls. As the images were intended to correspond with altar dedications, the choir almost becomes a scaled version of the church itself. The choir precinct was not an isolated intervention, but was situated at the heart of the church, reflecting its sacred topography.

## 6.5 The Frari choir screen

The Frari choir screen with its relief portraits of prophets, decorated pilasters with putti, incorporated pulpits, figures of apostles and a crucifixion scene, is reminiscent of the fourteenth-century screen in the Ducal Chapel of San Marco (Fig.182).<sup>105</sup> Completed by Jacobello and Pierpaolo dalle Masegne in 1395 (1394 *more veneto*), the San Marco screen was amongst the first to incorporate freestanding figures in the round.<sup>106</sup> Silhouettes of apostle figures around a crucifixion scene and the display of precious marble panels and columns attest its importance as a precedent for the Frari screen.

In San Marco, the two large hexagonal marble pulpits known as ‘*bigonzi*’ situated before the screen are composed of coloured marble, green on the left and red on the right. In the Frari, the concept of coloured polygonal pulpits was retained but were incorporated into the screen itself. Most tellingly, the inscription on the Frari screen referring to the procurator of the church, Jacopo Morosini, is strikingly similar to the inscription on the

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<sup>104</sup>The frescoes in the church were completed between the second half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. Caterina Furlan and Italo Zannier, eds, *Il Duomo di Spilimbergo 1284–1984* (Pordenone: Comune di Spilimbergo, 1985), pp. 157–176.

<sup>105</sup>For the iconostasis of San Marco, see Wolfgang Wolters, *La scultura veneziana gotica (1300–1460)* (Venice: Alfieri, 1976), 223, cat.146.

<sup>106</sup>However, Wolters argues that inspiration for the iconostasis came from the screen installed in St Peter’s in Rome by Gregory III (731–41), which had figures of the Redeemer, Madonna, apostles and virgin saints. Wolters (1976), p. 223.

San Marco screen, which also runs across the entire width of the screen and indicates that it was donated by the procurators of San Marco.<sup>107</sup>

After their communications with the Santo in the early 1460s, the Frari could have again referred to the Santo's choir precinct as a source, this time for the marble choir screen. A reconstruction by Lorenzo Urbani of the Santo's screen with its central triumphal arch, crucifix and parapet with statues of saints is similar to the Frari's screen of thirty years later (Fig. 246).<sup>108</sup> However, the triumphal arch motif in the reconstruction was not cited in the 1590 description of the structure by Valerio Polidoro, on which the drawing was based (see Appendix B.9 on p. 310).

The Paduan choir stalls were enclosed by a marble wall on three sides, and a further open screen stretched between two of the nave columns, leaving a vestibule area between the two screens (see a sixteenth-century plan of the basilica in Fig. 247 and Calore's modern reconstruction in Fig. 248). Polidoro described the three abutting walls of the Paduan choir as comprising ten white and fourteen red pilasters above a continuous white marble base. These left twenty equal distances, of which eight were filled with red stone surmounted by shiny black settings surrounded by white marble ornament, while twelve were also filled with marble, displaying above many large bronze panels depicting Old Testament scenes. The western screen between the two nave columns comprised an open tribune of eight columns filled with iron grates. Polidoro did not mention a triumphal arch, but wrote that 'three doors' gave access to the choir area, one of which was the entrance opposite the high altar.

The ensemble which Polidoro described was constructed in two phases. The majority of the structural work took place from around 1438 to the late 1440s, in tandem with Donatello's innovative high altar.<sup>109</sup> Further changes occurred from 1482, when the *Arca* decided to add decoration to the wall abutting the stalls, and in 1490 to restructure the

<sup>107</sup>The San Marco inscription reads: 'MCCCXCIIII HOC OPUS FACTUM FUIT TEMPORE EXCELSI DOMINI ANTHONII VENERIO DEI GRATIA DUCIS VENETIARUM AC NOBILIIUM VIRORUM DOMINORUM PETRI CORNERIO ET MICHAELIS STENO HONORABILIIUM PROCURATORUM'. In smaller letters beneath: 'IACOBELLUS ET PETRUS PAULUS FRATRES DE VENECIIS FECIT HOC OPUS'. The Frari inscription reads: OPTIME IACOBO MAVROCENO PROCVRANTE HIS SEDIB[US] HAEC MARMORA SVNT ADIVNCTA MCCCCLXXV'. Paula Modesti, 'Recinzioni con colonne nelle chiese veneziane. Tradizioni, revival, sopravvivenze', in *Lo spazio e il culto. Relazioni tra edificio ecclesiale e uso liturgico dal XV al XVI secolo*, ed. by Jörg Stabenow (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), p. 184.

<sup>108</sup>Reconstruction by Lorenzo Urbani in Gonzati (1852), p. 68.

<sup>109</sup>Andrea Calore, 'Il coro e il presbiterio della basilica del Santo. Vicende storiche e artistiche nel sec. XV', *Il Santo. Rivista francescana di storia dottrina arte* 38, no. 1–2 (1998), p. 74.

entrance to the choir.<sup>110</sup> In the late 1480s, freestanding statues were placed above this newly reordered entrance<sup>111</sup> and in 1486–87, Donatello's crucifix was added to the ensemble, when the Santo officials ordered that it be put in the 'centre of the entrance to the choir'.<sup>112</sup> Although Gonzati's reconstruction of the Santo choir appears very close to the Frari version in its use of pilasters, coloured and decorated marble, Old Testament iconography and a crucifix over a doorway, much of this appearance dates to the 1480s. This later dating points to an interaction between the two Franciscan institutions rather than any direct influence. In addition, scholars of the Santo are inevitably preconditioned by the presence of the Frari screen, making it hard to be sure of an accurate reconstruction.<sup>113</sup>

A notable difference between the Frari structure and the screens in San Marco and the Santo is the addition of marble reliefs of prophets on the façade, which produce a similar effect to icons on a Byzantine iconostasis. An influx of Greek friars to the convent in the 1460s could have provided a stimulus for the idea. In 1463, after the Franciscans of Constantinople had been expelled by the Turks, Pope Pius II ordered that they join the Venetian community.<sup>114</sup> The importance of this event was marked by the erection of a now lost colonnade and well near to the main entrance of the church, donated by one of the friars, Antonio Pittoni.<sup>115</sup> Goffen has suggested that the Byzantine motif of gold mosaic in two Franciscan commissions by Giovanni Bellini could have had a connection with the Greek friars, suggesting that they could have also influenced the design of the choir precinct.<sup>116</sup>

Although the idea of placing icon-like images on the screen might have had a Byzantine influence, the reliefs themselves are very Venetian. Paoletti commented on the mediocre

<sup>110</sup>Calore (1998), pp. 93–94.

<sup>111</sup>Calore (1998), p. 97.

<sup>112</sup>Johnson's translation. Geraldine A. Johnson, 'The Original Placement of Donatello's Bronze Crucifix in the Santo in Padua', *The Burlington Magazine* 139, no. 1137 (December 1997), p. 860.

<sup>113</sup>Johnson used the measurements of the length of the Frari choir precinct in her reconstruction of the plan of the Santo in the fifteenth century. Johnson (1999), pp. 632–633.

<sup>114</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1747: 'Anno 1463 fabricae domus S. S. Francisci (scilicet fratrum S. Francisci) S. Mariae Venetarum, la casa grande vulgariter nuncupatae, deputantur fructus magnae summae pecuniarum depositae apud campsores imprestitorum urbis Venetae pro udibus et necessitatibus domus eiusdem ordinis apud perae oppidum et regionis urbis Constantinopolitanae constructae nunc autem e Turcis destructae.'

<sup>115</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1747: 'Postremo nostra hac aetate Antonius Pittoni monasterii alumnus, ut introeuntium oculis huiusce domus aditus gratior evaderet, ac elegantior suis sumptibus ianuae maioris peristylum refici magnificentius curavit, marmoreisque statuīs hinc inde erectis circumdari, ad in arcore medio ad communem utilitatem puteum lapideis pariter simulacris exornatum instrui iussit.' It is not known whether this structure was built.

<sup>116</sup>Goffen (1986), p. 51.

quality of some, attributing the set to three masters, one of which must have been Pietro Lombardo.<sup>117</sup> He would have done the most refined reliefs, such as the Doctors of the Church beneath the pulpits, and could have helped the other masters by finishing off their work. McAndrew characterised the screen as a synthesis of the Gothic and Transitional styles, explaining that Bartolomeo Buon started the work later to be taken over by Pietro Lombardo.<sup>118</sup> Wolters also ascribes the screen to Pietro Lombardo and likens it to the earlier structure at San Marco.<sup>119</sup>

Reliefs of Doctors of the Church, of higher quality than the prophets, are paired beneath the integrated pulpits on either side (Fig. 249).<sup>120</sup> Gregory and Jerome appear on the left, *in cornu evangelii*, while Ambrose and Augustine are on the right, *in cornu epistolae*. The doctors each have their own lion and the two pairs are seated in different types of chairs.<sup>121</sup> Jerome, associated with the translation of the Bible, is situated beneath the pulpit used for the reading of the Gospels, while Ambrose, particularly associated with preaching, is shown beneath the pulpit used for the reading of epistles. The figure of the donor, Jacopo Morosini, holds a scroll which reads ‘SOLI DEO HONOR E[T] [GL]ORIA’ taken from Paul’s letter to Timothy- ‘soli Deo honor et gloria in saecula seculorum’ (Fig. 250).<sup>122</sup> This particularly humble quotation was suitable for the procurator, who wished to offset the grandeur of placing himself among the great Old Testament figures with an appearance of humility commonly presented by Venetian patrons.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>117</sup>Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 193: ‘Chi però attentamente esamina tutta i bassorilievi di queste formelle... non può a meno di finire col riconoscere che devono avervi preso parte tre maestri... uno di loro... sarebbe Pietro Lombardo’.

<sup>118</sup>McAndrew’s unfinished book does not hint at any documentary evidence for this dual attribution. McAndrew (1980), pp. 56–57.

<sup>119</sup>Wolfgang Wolters, *Architektur und Ornament. Venezianischer Bauschmuck der Renaissance* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2000), p. 197.

<sup>120</sup>Paoletti noted that the reliefs of Doctors of the Church were more refined and that the ‘character and delicate manner’ of Pietro Lombardo could be detected. Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 193.

<sup>121</sup>Similar reliefs of Bishops, Cardinals and Popes seated on diverse chairs can be seen in Antonello Gagini’s tribune in the church of San Cita in Palermo, completed between 1503 and 1517. Noted in Paoletti (1893–1897), p. 193. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *Antonello Gagini und seine Söhne* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1980), 408, figs 35, 38.

<sup>122</sup>1 Timothy 1:17. As noted by Markham Schulz in Anne Markham Schulz, *The Badoer-Giustiniani Chapel in San Francesco della Vigna, Venice* (Florence: Centro Di, 2003), 82n. The preceding part reads ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst’ (1 Timothy 1:15). It is appropriate that a quotation from St Paul appears beneath the pulpit used for the reading of epistles.

<sup>123</sup>The phrase ‘ONOR VIRTUS ET GLORIA’ is repeated on the base frieze of the intarsia spalliere in the San Marco sacristy, begun in 1486. Umberto Daniele, Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Ettore Vio, *Tarsie lignee della Basilica di San Marco* (Rizzoli, 1998), p. 11. The inscription ‘SOLI DEO ET ONOR ET GLORIA’ can be seen on the facade of Palazzo Trevisan Cappello on Rio di Palazzo, near Piazza San Marco. The same quotation can be seen on a house in Venice, San Marco 557, noted in Richard Schofield, ‘Architettura e scultura veneziana nel secondo Quattrocento: due problemi aperti e un fantasma’, in *I Lombardo. Architettura*

As in the stalls, the presence of saints on the screen alludes to altar dedications in the church (Fig. 242). A relief showing John the Baptist is situated on the left side of the screen, on the same side as his depiction in the choir stalls and both the chapels dedicated to him: the chapel of the Scuola dei Milanesi, situated third to the left of the high altar and also dedicated to St Ambrose; and the chapel to the left of the main entrance in the nave, ceded to the Scuola dei Fiorentini. A series of freestanding figures of saints and apostles, most of which are unidentifiable, appear above the screen. Above the triumphal arch, the wooden crucifix exploits the contrast with the smoothly finished marble to highlight Christ's suffering and humility (Fig. 251). Although Augusti proposed that Verrocchio could have carved the crucifix while in Venice in the late 1470s, a lack of documentary evidence hinders attempts at a secure attribution.<sup>124</sup>

A figure of St Peter, immediately to the left of the arch, looks to his right towards the Emiliani chapel dedicated to him (Fig. 252). Symbols of evangelists appear in roundels on the arch, two on either face. On the façade side, the left roundel shows the lion of St Mark and the right the ox of St Luke, placed in the same order as the images on the front of the Frari's fifteenth-century processional cross.<sup>125</sup>

Later Venetian choir screens at the Augustinian church of Santo Stefano and the Franciscan church of San Francesco della Vigna continue the Frari combination of marble reliefs and freestanding figures. At Santo Stefano (*c.* 1488) the number of reliefs was reduced to six, depicting the four evangelists together with Augustine and Stephen, but the number of freestanding figures was increased to include all twelve apostles.<sup>126</sup> At San Francesco della Vigna in the 1490s, the relief sculptures of prophets were supplemented by smaller rectangular panels showing narrative scenes from the life of Christ (Fig. 253). The marble panels, now in the Badoer-Giustiniani chapel in the church, probably formed part

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*e scultura a Venezia tra '400 e '500*, ed. by Andrea Guerra, Manuela M. Morresi and Richard Schofield (Venice: Marsilio, 2006), p. 29n.

<sup>124</sup>Adriana Augusti, 'Una proposta per Andrea Verrocchio', in *Studi per Pietro Zampetti*, ed. by Ranieri Varese (Ancona: Il Lavoro, 1993), p. 212. Although Covi noted a visit by Verrocchio to Venice in 1469, he did not link this with the Frari crucifix. Dario A. Covi, 'Verrocchio and Venice, 1469', *The Art Bulletin* 65, no. 2 (June 1983), pp. 253–73.

<sup>125</sup>For illustration see Pazzi (1976), p. 44. The Frari's cross seems to be quite unusual in its layout of evangelists. In most contemporary processional crosses, such as the one made in the second quarter of the fifteenth century for Vicenza Cathedral, all four evangelist symbols are placed on the front, with Mark on the left, Luke on the right, Matthew at the bottom and John at the top. Spiazzi (2004), 172–174, cat. 90.

<sup>126</sup>Bristot has questioned whether the six reliefs were originally attached to the screen, given their stylistic differences with the apostle statues. Bristot (2007), p. 456. For the screen, see footnote on p. 107.



of a choir screen or *barco*, mentioned in Girolamo Badoer's notes for his will in 1494–5.<sup>127</sup> Each prophet was linked to a narrative scene through the prophetic verse they hold, as Anne Markham Schulz has shown.<sup>128</sup> Their debt to the Frari screen is unquestionable, and is made more explicit by a detail of the costume of prophets Malachi and Hosea in which their tunics are held together with buttons which are strained to their limit.<sup>129</sup> The same feature characterises the reliefs of Ezekiel, Isaac and Jonah on the Frari screen.

Anne Markham Schulz did not reconstruct the San Francesco screen in detail, but suggested that six prophets were placed on one long lateral side of the *barco*, and six on the other with their accompanying narrative scenes. The façade would have housed the culmination of the narrative sequence with the events of the Passion, including the slightly wider extant scenes of the Crucifixion and the Lamentation. Schulz's reconstruction would have created a confusing narrative sequence if the viewer had to look at the scenes along one side, then the other side and eventually reach the façade. Her reconstruction also means that the prophets are facing different directions in no real pattern. If the scenes and prophets were all arranged on the western face in two rows (mirroring the Frari) then not only would the narrative sequence be conserved, but all the prophets would turn in towards the central opening. The screen would have been around 7m wide and over 3m high, similar proportions to the Frari screen, filling the space between the two chapels on either side of the crossing.

It is notable that San Francesco della Vigna, which would later form part of the Observant branch of the Franciscan church in the early 1500s, chose to build a choir structure so similar to their Conventual neighbours.<sup>130</sup> The decision is even more curious considering that at San Giobbe, built as an Observant church, a retrochoir had been started in the second half of the fifteenth century. The influence of the Frari choir screen also reached San Giobbe where, instead of being situated on a screen, half-length marble reliefs

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<sup>127</sup>ASV, Archivio notarile, busta 1210 (not. Antonio Marsilio), no. 627. Transcribed in Markham Schulz (2003), p. 92: 'Sia compido de muro e de legniami e cossi de slongar la giexia de messer San Francesco e slongado el coro e el parco come e dessegnado 1/3. El coro 2/3 in giexia.'

<sup>128</sup>Markham Schulz (2003), pp. 18–26.

<sup>129</sup>Markham Schulz (2003), p. 70.

<sup>130</sup>Francesco Zorzi, guardian of San Francesco from 1500, attended the Observant Franciscan Chapter in Ferrara in 1509, suggesting that the church was then allied with the Observant branch. Antonio Foscari and Manfredo Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti. La chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nella Venezia del '500* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1983), p. 18. The choir complex in front of the high altar was replaced in Sansovino's new church, started in 1535, with a long retrochoir. See Howard (1975), pp. 64–74.

of prophets facing the altar decorate the chancel arch. There is a striking comparison between the Frari John the Baptist and the San Giobbe version; both hold a small lamb in their left hands and have an open tunic on the right revealing a muscular arm and hair shirt (Figg. 254, 255). Whereas at San Francesco, the choir's similarity to the Frari is noticeable, at San Giobbe, the recollection of the traditional choir precinct of the Frari emphasises their decision to build a modern retrochoir.

## 6.6 Choir placement in the Frari

The placement of the choir in the east bays of the nave was the traditional siting of mendicant choirs, but in the second half of the fifteenth century various Franciscan churches were in the process of removing their choirs behind the high altar. As we have seen, the Venetian church of San Giobbe was rebuilt with a large Gothic longitudinal retrochoir behind a domed presbytery which would become a mausoleum for the church's benefactor, Doge Cristoforo Moro. In Brescia, the friars of San Francesco had plans to move their choir behind the high altar as early as 1451 and a further concession enabled them to start the work in 1463.<sup>131</sup> The screen was removed and the choir stalls placed around the apse, in order that the church seem larger and more aesthetically pleasing. Since the Frari installed a new choir five years after the renovations in Brescia, it was a consciously traditionalist action. Maintenance of the choir precinct in its original position throughout the centuries shows a commitment to this decision. However, the Frari choir can be seen as a compromise solution; situated before the high altar, it is not a deep tramezzo with chapels stretching the entire width of the nave.

The Frari choir is extraordinary not through virtue of its unusual position, but that it has remained there until the present day. The 1581 visitation of Agostino Valier, Bishop of Verona, recorded that the choir was 'in the middle [of the church] furnished with three rows of seats'<sup>132</sup> but gave no indication that it should be moved. Recommendations to the friars focussed on cleanliness, and the only liturgical improvements required were the removal of temporary altars and the moving of certain altars which faced away from the high altar.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>See Chapter Four, section 4.2.

<sup>132</sup>Ritzler (1969), p. 169: 'choro in medio ornato tribus ordinibus sedilium.'

<sup>133</sup>Ritzler (1969), p. 174: 'Duo altaria, quae sunt in frontispicio ad portam maiorem, ammoveantur infra octo dies et transferantur in alium locum, ne sacerdos terga vertat ad altare maius, [sub] poena ut

One of reasons why the Frari's screen survived later renovations was its symbiosis with the triumphal arch frame of Titian's *Assunta* in the *cappella maggiore*. When viewed from the nave, the choir screen frames the view of the high altarpiece, linking the two parts of the church. Titian's magnificent altarpiece was installed in 1518 on the behest of Fra Germano da Casale, prior of the Frari.<sup>134</sup> The triumphal arch of the frame is decorated with gilded arabesque designs echoing the carvings on the entrance to the choir, providing a clear visual link between the two structures.<sup>135</sup> The ornament of the altarpiece frame appears relatively crude when observed up close, suggesting that the ideal location from which to view the structure was the nave (Fig. 256).

In fact, a curious effect occurs when the viewer approaches the choir from the main entrance. From the main portal, the top of the painting is obscured by the screen, enticing the viewer to walk forward to rectify the view. When the viewer is in the middle of the third bay, the whole painting is framed by the marble arch and the entablature of the screen aligns with a cornice on the altarpiece frame which is almost completely obscured by the fluted Corinthian columns (Fig. 257). The pleasing visual alignment of these two elements suggests that the centre of the third bay was intended to be the ideal viewpoint of the two structures.

Intriguingly, this viewing position corresponds with the location of a now unused side door incorporated into the baroque tomb of Doge Giovanni Pesaro, designed by Baldassare Longhena and dated 1665–69 (Fig. 258).<sup>136</sup> This must have been an important entrance to the basilica being preserved in the tomb design. In addition, above the exterior portal, a thirteenth-century relief of the enthroned Madonna and Child was inserted into the brickwork, highlighting the importance of the entrance (Fig. 259). The relief shows the Madonna *lactans* seated on a decorated throne, flanked by two angels above and two Franciscan friars kneeling at her feet. Considering its age, the relief must have been saved from the old basilica and reinserted into the fourteenth-century fabric. The highly prized

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in regulis . . . Altaria portatilia parva ammoveantur, et parentur quae sint ut in regulis, sub poenis in eis contentis.'

<sup>134</sup>The inscriptions on the tall pedestals of the flanking columns read: ASSVMPTAE IN COELVM VIRGINI AETERNI OPIFICIS MATRI and FRATER GERMANVS HANC ARAM ERIGI CVRAVIT MCXVI. David Rosand, 'Titian in the Frari', *The Art Bulletin* LIII, no. 2 (June 1971), 196n.

<sup>135</sup>Rosand (1971), p. 200.

<sup>136</sup>Giovanni Pesaro had requested in his will of 1659 to be buried in the Frari, but his nephew Leonardo Pesaro initiated the tomb project in 1665. Martina Frank, *Baldassare Longhena* (Venice: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2004), p. 334, cat. 59.

relief, together with the white and pink marble decoration of the portal, highlights the significance of this entrance, called the ‘Porta della Madonna’ in a document of 1518 in which the friars ceded the adjacent space to Giacomo Pesaro.<sup>137</sup> Upon entering the church through this impressive portal, dignitaries would have experienced the ideal viewpoint of Titian’s *Assunta* framed by the choir screen, a sight charged with symbolic meaning.

The triumphal arch motif appeared in most of the artistic production for the Frari from the 1470s to the 1510s. It featured in the Tron tomb of 1476, a construction which involved Jacopo Morosini in the planning procedures; Giovanni Bellini’s *Pesaro altarpiece*; and Alvise Vivarini’s *Sant’Ambrogio altarpiece*. Unusually, the shape appeared in the *Reliquary of the Holy Blood*, made by Evangelista da Zara in 1485 to preserve the relic brought from the church of St Cristina in Constantinople in 1479 by Melchior Trevisan (Fig. 260).<sup>138</sup> In a striking example of Renaissance micro-architectural metalwork, the reliquary recalls both the design and stylistic features of the Frari choir screen. Two square columns with Corinthian capitals support a heavy entablature and round archway, above which two winged angels kneel in adoration of the empty cross. To either side of the columns figures of St Francis stand on the left and St Anthony of Padua on the right, while the relic itself would have been kept in a vessel beneath the arch (the present container is a later piece devoid of relics). The arch itself recalls the slightly stilted arch of the Frari screen, while the floral patterns on the reliquary’s architrave, pilasters and base echo similar decoration on the screen. When the reliquary was carried in processions through the choir screen a striking juxtaposition could have been observed between the two macro and micro arches, the larger crowned by the crucified Christ, the smaller with the empty cross of glory. Flaminio Corner described the procession which took place on 19 March 1480, the year after the relic was donated but before it received its elaborate metal reliquary.<sup>139</sup> He also stated that this ritual was repeated annually on Passion Sunday (two weeks before Easter), when the relic would be shown to the numerous crowds of faithful.

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<sup>137</sup>Document dated 3 January 1518, transcribed in Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1805: ‘Capella della Beatissima Vergine Maria sotto il titolo della di lei concettione posta in chiesa di detto monistero dal lato destro tra la capella di S. Pietro e la porta di mezo chiamata la porta della madonna’. Processions might have entered the church from the calle opposite, called ‘Calle della Passione’.

<sup>138</sup>Pazzi (1976), p. 71. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1803.

<sup>139</sup>Corner (1758), p. 363: ‘Nell’anno poscia susseguente 1480 avendola egli donata à Frati Minori, fu ella con solenne processione nel giorno XIX. di Marzo trasportata alla loro chiesa, ove annualmente nella Domenica di Passione s’espone ad un numeroso concorso di divoto popolo, che portasi a venerla.’

The triumphal arch beneath a crucifixion scene was a highly symbolic motif for the choir screen, setting the scene for liturgical processions passing through the prophecies of the Old Testament and under the suffering Christ to the triumph of the Eucharist. The conflation of the ideas of choir screen and triumphal arch can be seen in a fresco of the *Last Judgement* by Gianfrancesco da Tolmezzo in the church of Sant'Antonio, Barbeano, near Spilimbergo (Fig. 261).<sup>140</sup> The gate of heaven which receives the elect is imagined as a screen with square marble panels, with angels playing musical instruments resembling the freestanding sculptures atop the Frari screen. Before the gate, two files of angels stand on wooden stall-like structures, further associating the image with choir structures. The fresco was completed in the 1480s<sup>141</sup> and the artist's awareness of the Frari screen could have come via the presence at nearby Spilimbergo of Marco Cozzi, the creator of the Frari stalls.<sup>142</sup> In Spilimbergo Cathedral, two late fifteenth-century pulpits could attest to the presence of a marble screen enclosing the wooden choir stalls, which could have been similar to the Frari structure (Fig. 262).<sup>143</sup> They were probably completed between 1486 and 1492, when various payments were made to stone carvers for unspecified reasons.<sup>144</sup> The Barbeano fresco could therefore reflect the idea of an arched choir screen resembling the entrance to heaven, adding an extra layer of interpretative meaning to the Frari structure.

The Frari choir could have kept its original position because there were too many reasons *not* to move it. Usually when choirs were removed from the nave they were placed in the apse behind the high altar. In the Frari however, there was too little space to fit all 124 seats in the relatively small apse, and the area was already occupied by important tombs and commissions. Titian's *Assunta*, which, as we have seen, was designed to be completely integrated with its surroundings, would have had to be moved.<sup>145</sup> These logistical considerations for the location of choirs were important, and could govern either the stasis of the choir as in the Frari, or its removal as in Santa Croce in Florence. In

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<sup>140</sup>Massimo Bonelli and Paolo Casadio, *Gianfrancesco da Tolmezzo. Il restauro degli affreschi di Barbeano e di Provesano* (Spilimbergo: Comune di Spilimbergo, 1983), pp. 12–14.

<sup>141</sup>Joppi gives the fresco a date of 1489, while Rizzi dates it to 1481. Bonelli and Casadio (1983), p. 13.

<sup>142</sup>The interaction of the two artists is attested by Gianfrancesco's use of Cozzi's intarsia *a toppo* designs on the thrones of the doctors of the church, seen in the vault of Barbeano.

<sup>143</sup>The pulpits are at present attached with modern concrete to the fourth set of piers counting from the west end.

<sup>144</sup>Alessandro Giacomello, *Guida del Duomo di Spilimbergo* (Spilimbergo 1984), p. 27.

<sup>145</sup>Rosand has shown that the visual break between the earthly space of the apostles and the heavenly realm above align with the horizontal divisions of the Gothic windows. Rosand (1971), p. 198.

the Florentine church, the original renovation plan did not involve moving the choir stalls, but logistical adjustments eventually enabled their placement around the high altar.<sup>146</sup> The realistic consideration of whether all the stalls would fit into the space was just as important as liturgical or aesthetic reasons. At the Frari, a similar pragmatic discussion could have taken place, but in the Venetian church more physical obstacles in the *cappella maggiore* had to be confronted, and there were more than double the number of stalls.

Doges' tombs occupied the wall space on either side of the *cappella maggiore*, the monuments to Nicolò Tron on the left and to Francesco Foscari on the right. In 1476, the left side of the *cappella maggiore* was ceded to the late Doge Nicolò Tron and his son Filippo Tron, an undertaking orchestrated by the Frari's procurator, Jacopo Morosini, who had financed the choir precinct. The contract explicitly stated that there should be no interference with the tomb after it had been installed:

The Magnificent Filippo Tron himself and his heirs, successors and descendants . . . can be placed in that tomb always and in eternity, without any obstacle, controversy or molestation [undertaken by] the Reverend fathers themselves or the brothers.<sup>147</sup>

In 1479, Girolamo Alberti was granted a monument 'in the middle of the *cappella maioris* of said church before the great altar between the tombs of the two Doges, that must not project far from the ground.'<sup>148</sup> Germano da Casale, the guardian who would later install Titian's *Assunta* in the *cappella maggiore*, ceded the centre of the chapel to Lorenzo Bragadin for his tomb in 1517, who was allowed a 'place and ground in the middle of the

<sup>146</sup>The original plan did not include moving the choir stalls behind the high altar. The request to move the choir completely to behind the high altar was set out in a letter from the Operai to Duke Cosimo on 21 July 1566. If the workers moved a small staircase in the *cappella maggiore* and moved the altarpiece, there would be enough room for all the friars: 'Advertendo Vostra Eccellentia Illustrissima che sia molto ben considerato, che, tirato l'altar maggiore innanzi quanto di può, et accresciuto alquanto le scalee, et levato una scaletta di dietro che non sarà più necessaria, s'quista circa braccia quattro di spazio, tanto che la cappella resterà capacissima per ricetta de' frati; et di già si è provato con tutti i lor frati che sono sessanta.' At the bottom of the letter, a representative of Duke Cosimo signalled the Duke's agreement: 'Se il coro si può mettere nella cappella maggiore, lievisi del tutto il coro dov'è hora.' Transcribed in Hall (1979), pp. 169–170.

<sup>147</sup>ASV, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Processi alla lettera T, Filippo Tron (1476, 17 April). Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1802: 'In que cadavera ipsius magnifici Philippi Troni et eius heredum, successorum et descenduntium, tam marium quam feminarum, ac omnium de prole de cha Trono, ac omnium aliorum sicut placebit ipsi magnifico domino Philippo collocari possint semper et in perpetuum, absq. aliquo obstaculo, controversia vel molestia rpsorum reverendorum patrum magistrorum et fratrum.'

<sup>148</sup>ASV, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, b. 106, Pergamena originale. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1803: 'feri facere unum monumentum . . . in medio capelle maioris dicte ecclesie ante altare magnum inter sepulchra duorum principum; que non emineat a terra multum.'

*cappella grande*.<sup>149</sup> It is not known if these floor monuments were actually installed and no remains of them exist. However, the documents show that the authorities at the Frari were willing for the *cappella maggiore* to become a mausoleum. The presence of so many tombs would have impeded any attempts to move the choir around the altar.

As we have seen, there were already some seats in the *cappella maggiore*, donated by the procurator of the church in the 1480s, Girolamo Delfin. Depending on how many benches were made, they could have been used by the officiating priests at the Mass, or as a second choir area, in a similar situation to Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice.<sup>150</sup> Delfin also ‘finished the organ in 1483’ and the concessions he left in his testament were used for the singers of the choir.<sup>151</sup>

Despite various existing obstacles in the apse, the friars could have decided to completely rebuild and extend the *cappella maggiore* but practical and liturgical considerations prevented any expansion. In the sixteenth century, the area to the rear of the Frari was increasingly becoming the domain of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, preventing any plans to extend the church (Fig. 263). In 1516, the same year of the inscription on the frame of Titian’s high altarpiece for the church (which was installed in 1518), Fra Germano came to an agreement with the Scuola regarding the rear of the *cappella maggiore*. The representatives of San Rocco wanted to demolish a wall of the cemetery and rebuild it eight feet closer to the *cappella maggiore*. It was their responsibility to pay for the work and maintain it at their expense, to rebury the corpses, clean up the area and give fifty ducats to the friars.<sup>152</sup> In agreeing to the Scuola’s plans, the Franciscans accepted that

<sup>149</sup>ASV, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, b.106, Catastico n.54. Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1805: ‘lochum et terenum in medio capelle magne.’

<sup>150</sup>The 1581 Apostolic Visitation to Venice noted that in Santi Giovanni e Paolo, the choir was still present in the nave, but there was also a ‘superiore’ choir around high altar, both areas being used when a lot of people were present. Modesti (2002), p. 43.

<sup>151</sup>Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1804: ‘Eodem Delphino procurante perfectum est organum an. 1483.’ Little is known about the earliest organ in the Frari, although an engraving by Coronelli in 1708 shows the instrument in the highest parts of the nave arch in the last bay on the left. Scolari noted an inscription on the campanile, which must have provided access to the organ, with the date 1487. Aldo Scolari, ‘La chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari ed il suo recente restauro’, *Venezia— Studi di arte e storia a cura della direzione del Museo Civico Correr* 1 (1920), 162n. An organist was listed among the friars in 1525, and the organ was restored in 1626 and finally demolished in 1732. Livio Chudoba and Oscar Mischiati, *Gli organi della basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venezia* (Venice: Fondazione Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, 1971), pp. 8–9.

<sup>152</sup>ASV, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, busta 102, 8 July 1516, transcribed in Sartori (1983–1988), vol. II.2, p. 1865: ‘Cum. sp.lis V.D. guardianus et socii schole batutorum beatissimi Rochi...cupiant pro ornamento et decore dicte suae scolae et ut prospectus sit amplius et liberior, q. quidam murus cimiterii eiusdem monasterii fratrum minorum iuxta ecclesiam dicti monasterii...removeatur, et quoniam est angulatus et in aliquibus suis partibus occupat prospectum dictae scolae requisiverunt R.D. guardianum

the area behind the church was not their responsibility or property. In the same year, by reorganising the interior of the *cappella maggiore* and relinquishing responsibility for the exterior, Fra Germano ensured that this part of the church would remain unchanged to the present day.

Campo San Rocco, behind the *cappella maggiore*, formed an integral part of one of the most important civic ceremonies in the life of the Frari. The Doge's visit to the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and the Frari on the feast of St Roch, 16 August, was described by Coronelli in 1744, but almost certainly took place long before this date. The dignitaries congregated in Campo San Rocco where the holes in the pavement to support the 'tendon del doge' are still visible. They then entered the convent through the door of the *Giardino dei Novizi* in the cloister *della Trinita*, entered the church and prayed before the high altar. The procession exited via the main nave door between two rows of friars, before returning to Palazzo Ducale in decorated boats.<sup>153</sup> As Campo San Rocco was important both to the Frari for its liturgy and to the increasingly popular Scuola Grande, any plans that the friars might have had to extend the apse became impractical.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Despite generally being overlooked in scholarship, the Frari choir precinct holds an important place in the history of Italian choir stalls, showing a reaction to the Santo stalls and inspiring new work in Spilimbergo. Morosini's highly unusual request for the Santo's stalls to be sent to Venice stimulated work on the Frari stalls, influencing their design. The 1469 General Chapter, as well as possibly providing the impetus for the construction of such impressive

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et alios patres dicti conventus, ut velint ad laudem beatissimi Rochi contentari q. dictus murus destruat expensis dictae scolae et similiter suis expensis reficiatur et dirigatur in rectum recedendo a dicto calli versus ecclesiam sive capellam maiorem dictae ecclesiae fratrum minorum per pedes octo vel circa prout iam mensurarunt et designarunt locum inter ipsos... ad tumulanda cadavera mortuorum expensis tamen dictae scolae et q. presertim guardianus et socii teneantur auferri facere rudera dicti cimiterii et ipsum locum mundare et spatari et insuper dare pro elemosina et respondere promiserunt dicto domino guardiano et fratribus ducatos quinquaginta auri ad omnem requitionem dicti domini guardiani et fratrum dicti conventus.'

<sup>153</sup>Coronelli (1744), pp. 59, 281: 'S. Ser accompagnato dalla Signoria, e dagl'Ambasciatori si porta alla visita della Chiesa, e Sc. di S. Rocco per la liberazione del Contaggio l'A. 1376 e poi visita la Chiesa de'Padri Miniori Conventuali detti li Frari... Il giorno di s. Rocco v'interviene il Ser. con gl'Ambasciatori, e Ss. Signoria, e nel tempo che stanno genuflessi avanti l'Alt. Magg. da Musici si canta un motteto, accompagnato da molti stromenti, e terminata l'adorazione del Venerabile escono per la Porta maggiore, accompagnati da tutti li Religiosi, che al numero di 80. in c. dimorano nel Convento chiamato la Ca grande de' Frari.' The event is also described in Gatti (1992), p. 66.



stalls, meant that they were seen by thousands of visiting friars. As in Spilimbergo, the saints portrayed in the Frari stalls were meaningful to the friars who sat in them. Through comparisons with contemporary *cassoni*, altarpieces and metalwork, most of the general decoration of the stalls has been shown to be in accordance with Venetian ornament. The Frari choir screen contained motifs used in San Marco and the Santo, and had a close interaction with later choir arrangements in the Franciscan churches of San Francesco della Vigna and San Giobbe.

Far from being a unique structure which survived because of its unusual properties, the Frari choir precinct was in keeping with other choirs in Venice and the Venetian Republic. The position of the structure before the high altar was observed by most churches in the fifteenth century. The stalls show analogies with their Paduan counterparts, Dalmatian stalls and other furniture by the Cozzi workshop. The screen, which is a compromise between an enclosing wall, iconostasis and barco, is less intrusive than larger, deeper screens. However, this factor did not prevent the similar screens in San Francesco della Vigna and Santo Stefano in Venice being removed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively. Rather, practical and liturgical reasons meant that the Frari did not have the space or the opportunity to create more room for the displacement of the choir. This was an important factor in Venice, a city where land was certainly not taken for granted.

One of the most important reasons why the Frari choir precinct remained untouched is its accordance with the rest of the church building. Instead of being purely decorative, the Frari's screen depicts iconography symbolising the spiritual journey from the Old Testament and Passion of Christ to the triumph of the Eucharist. The visual interaction between the screen and the high altarpiece was not coincidental, but was specifically designed so that the ideal viewpoint was in the centre of the third bay, aligned with the Porta della Madonna. The triumphal arch motif was used on the screen and high altarpiece, and also featured in the reliquary of the Holy Blood. The presence of the motif on this piece of metalwork, a unique design for a reliquary of this date, highlights its significance. The triumphal arch united artistic commissions at the Frari in the last quarter of the fifteenth and first quarter of the sixteenth centuries, a confident theme expressing the victory of the resurrection.

Unlike many contemporary choir stalls which showed generic intarsia scenes, the Frari

stalls also feature images of saints relevant to the Franciscan order which reflect the position of chapels in the church. Moreover, the eucharistic symbolism used on the stalls allies them both to the crucifix on the screen and the mystery of the mass at the high altar. The cumulative effect of these interactions with the rest of the building made the structure a vital and meaningful part of the sacred topography of the church.

# Conclusion

Responding to the sparse literature on the subject, I have shown that in the Renaissance, choir stalls were considered essential features of the church interior. Although now situated in remote locations in the church, stalls were once highly prized items of furniture and considered to be praiseworthy artistic structures in their own right. As the location for religious ritual, the elevated status of the choir area was reflected in the detailed and sophisticated design of its wooden furniture. Contemporary texts such as descriptions and letters show that both clerics and laymen appreciated stalls' iconography and intricate ornament. Contracts indicate that stalls were expensive and coveted status symbols for every serious religious institution, sparking intense competition between patrons. Ecclesiastical furniture was a respected art form and often cost more than painted high altarpieces.

This thesis has contributed both to the study of church woodwork and to broader issues in the study of Renaissance ecclesiastical art, including the ritual use of sacred space, the relationship of form and function, and workshop practices. I have pieced together the stylistic history of north-Italian choir stalls from the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries, introducing previously unpublished material. Developed from fourteenth-century carved stalls with coved canopies, a variety of styles coexisted in the fifteenth century featuring Gothic micro-architecture, tracery and perspective intarsia panels. In the Cinquecento, symbolic and narrative intarsia iconography was emphasised before the return of relief carving at the end of the century. Gothic stalls, especially, tend to be overlooked by scholars focussing on intarsia, but a new corpus of images has revealed their sophisticated designs and techniques.

Drawing on recent work on altarpiece contracts, I have systematically collected and analysed choir stall contracts for the first time. Newly transcribed documents and contract

drawings have added to the already extensive published documentary evidence. Contracts confirm that choir furniture was a considerable investment, subtly modifying modern perceptions of the relative worth of artworks in this period. I have collated contemporary terminology used to describe these unfamiliar objects, which can subsequently aid interpretation of future documentary discoveries.

Situating my research in a broader European context, I have investigated the single most unique feature of Italian stalls: their lack of misericords. Having identified misericords in several Carthusian choirs, I concluded that their presence derived from strict liturgical guidelines. In a close interaction between form and function, the Carthusian case exemplifies how choir stalls were adapted to their ceremonial use. Analysis of liturgical guidelines from other religious and secular orders has also revealed that choir precincts were designed to express hierarchy and facilitate activities such as antiphonal singing. Some individual communities acquired furniture, organs and professional choirs in the same period, integrating patterns of patronage improving the setting for liturgy and music.

However, liturgical considerations were not the principal cause of the Quattrocento renovations centered on the removal of choir stalls behind the high altar. Often considered as a post-Tridentine phenomenon, I have shown that several churches removed choir precincts in the later fifteenth century due to practical, spatial and aesthetic motivations. Full transcriptions of illuminating documents from San Francesco in Brescia and Santa Corona in Vicenza have provided valuable insights into this phenomenon, indicating the general lack of specific legislation and the influence of lay patrons.

This thesis has established that focussing on choir placement can also shed light on the analysis of paintings and architecture. In Santa Corona in Vicenza, the new choir placement left space for the prominent positioning and colossal scale of Giovanni Bellini's *Baptism of Christ*. In the same church, new processional routes to the choir area reveal the impact of the new arrangement on conventual space. Similarly, the preservation of the medieval choir placement in the Frari in Venice impinged on the composition of Titian's high altarpiece, designed to visually interact with the arched choir screen. Through its careful alignment with the screen, this framing subtly alluded to processional routes around the basilica.

Two Venetian case studies demonstrated the value of examining individual choir

precincts in their original stylistic and spatial context. In San Zaccaria, I proposed a reconstruction the choir in the private space of the nuns' Gothic church. The new choir stalls were fundamental to the reorganisation of sacred space associated with the building of a new Renaissance basilica intended for lay and ceremonial use. In a comparison with other nuns' stalls, I suggested that the distinctive geometric patterns on the San Zaccaria stall-backs formed part of a furniture tradition intended for a female religious audience. In the Frari, I investigated reasons why the choir precinct has, unusually, survived in its original position. Not only did changing circumstances preclude the possibility of extending the *cappella maggiore*, but the choir precinct was conspicuously integrated—visually, ideologically and spatially—with its surroundings.

In addition to these specific conclusions, my research has revealed insights into more general questions. As highly decorated items of furniture, choir stalls lay on the boundary between being aesthetically pleasing and purely utilitarian. To what extent were stalls regarded as artistic or practical objects? Furthermore, were they considered essential components in religious ceremony or simply items of furniture which could be moved for practical reasons? My research has revealed a compromise between these considerations. While contracts contained precise instructions for the construction of stalls, they rarely dictated specific intarsia iconography, which overlapped with designs for domestic furniture. Moreover, ceremonial guidelines showed the importance of precise seating arrangements, but choirs were moved simply to create additional space in the nave, radically altering these layouts. What do these differing ideas reveal about attitudes to choir precincts?

A determining factor was that despite the central importance of the choir in liturgical activities, the seating area itself was not consecrated or governed by specific canon law. Changes to lay altars situated on the screen or tramezzo were subject to approval by the patron or church authorities, but the stalls themselves could be altered without appeal. Whereas the use of choir stalls was governed by liturgical guidelines, their physical form and location was not strictly determined. Although, as we have seen, Benedictine Cassinese and Dominican chapter acts prescribed certain rules for churches belonging to that order, general canon law did not contain any such regulations on choirs.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, as Julian Gardner

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<sup>1</sup>At the 1249 Dominican General Chapter, friars were ordered to construct an *intermedia* or tramezzo. Hall (2006), p. 218.

has shown, altars were subject to specific canon law requiring they were constructed from monolithic stone, contain relics and display two candles and a cross.<sup>2</sup> However, in the third part of the *Decretum Gratiani* entitled *De consecratione*, choirs and their stalls were not mentioned.<sup>3</sup> As functional spaces, choirs were not consecrated or dedicated at their installation. Choir stalls were moved without recourse to higher authority, and iconography could be religious, secular or decorative, demonstrating a versatile attitude to the area.

This adaptability could also extend to the use of the seating. Intriguingly, the laity were given access to the choir on certain occasions, especially in cathedrals. The Padua Cathedral ceremonial specified that lay people were not permitted to ‘stand or sit in the choir of canons *during the divine office*’ (my italics), suggesting that they could enter the area at other times.<sup>4</sup> In the ceremonial from Novara Cathedral, canons were ordered not to talk in choir ‘and especially with laymen’.<sup>5</sup> This rubric indicates that laymen must have been present in the choir at some times, as it implies that the offence of conversing had already occurred. Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo’s report of a funeral in 1515 shows that official dignitaries could also sit in mendicant choirs. He described a grand procession from San Marco to the Augustinian church of Santo Stefano, where the coffin was placed under a baldachino, and the Doge took his place ‘as was the custom . . . in the choir’.<sup>6</sup> The presence of laity in choirs of cathedrals and mendicant churches revises modern perceptions of choir decoration and its intended audiences. The choir area was subject to the changing demands of space in the church interior.

Choir design and placement has also raised questions of corporate patronage. Was there any consistency within religious and secular communities in the decoration, commissioning or placement of choir precincts? Perhaps contrary to expectations, my research has revealed few patterns amongst choirs constructed for churches belonging to the same orders.

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<sup>2</sup>Julian Gardner, ‘Altars, altarpieces, and art history: legislation and usage’, in *Italian Altarpieces 1250–1550. Function and Design*, ed. by Eve Borsook and Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 7, 10.

<sup>3</sup>In this text, Gratian concentrated on churches and altars. *Decretum Gratiani*, Patrologiae Latinae no. 187 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1891).

<sup>4</sup>Cattin and Vildera (2002), p. 199: ‘layci non debent stare vel sedere in choro clericorum ad divinum officium’.

<sup>5</sup>Fonseca (1990), p. 112: ‘De non confabulando in choro. XI. Item ut in choro omnes a confabulationibus temperent et maxime laichorum. Et qui contrafecerit, perdat denarium unum in data pro qualibet vice.’

<sup>6</sup>Description of the funeral of Bartolommeo D’Aviano in November 1515 in Santo Stefano: ‘e posta le cassa in chiesa soto il baldachin, et reduto *de more* la Signoria in choro’. Marino Sanuto, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto* (Bologna: Libreria Editrice Forni, 1969), Vol. 21, column 276.

Some connections have been made between Dominican stalls which display intarsia *a buio* patterns, and between furniture in the Franciscan houses of the Frari and the Santo in Padua. However, stylistically similar stalls were constructed in parish churches, cathedrals and mendicant houses.<sup>7</sup> In choir contracts, imitation clauses rarely referred to choirs of the same religious order. Instead, ecclesiastical patrons preferred to emulate choirs for different orders often in distant cities, showing that copying the latest designs was more important than perpetuating any corporate identity. Furthermore, ecclesiastical authorities set no specific legislation on choir placement, and the early development of retrochoirs was not confined to one particular religious group. Choirs were removed from positions in front of the high altar in cathedrals as well as churches of the mendicant orders.

This fluidity between religious orders even extended to the liturgical use of stalls. In special services which involved cooperation with other religious orders, clergy from different churches could sit in the choir, as illustrated by a Paduan example. On the feast of St Prosdocimus (one of the city's patron saints) celebrations centred on the Cassinese monastery of Santa Giustina, which housed the saint's relics. According to the 1448 Cassinese ceremonial, in the morning the monks would solemnly sing mass at the altar of St Prosdocimus.<sup>8</sup> After Terce, the first vespers and a mass were 'sung in the choir by the clergy of the bishop of Padua', showing that at least in Santa Giustina, the area was not solely reserved for the monastic community.<sup>9</sup> A much later document from 1641 shows that the monks of Santa Giustina eventually conceded use of their choir to the cathedral canons on a more permanent basis.<sup>10</sup> The monks granted the canons 'liberal use of the choir at the aforementioned church of Santa Giustina' so long as the monks did not experience any disadvantages.<sup>11</sup> As Santa Giustina unusually housed two choirs at

<sup>7</sup>Similar inconsistencies are also evident in English medieval stalls, as Tracy commented: 'it is likely that there was no distinction in choir-stall design to be made between the different monastic orders. Had the buildings under discussion been collegiate or parish churches the level of artistic quality could have easily been on a par.' Tracy (1990), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Trolese (1994), p. 61: 'In hoc festo dicta prima summo mane cantatur sollenniter a monachis missa de festo ad altare Sancti Prosdocimi'. After the word 'missa' a sixteenth-century hand added the words 'in choro', showing that in later periods the ceremony changed.

<sup>9</sup>Trolese (1994), p. 61: 'cantant in choro clerici episcopatus Padue.'

<sup>10</sup>The document states that Bernardo Pollani was podestà of Padua and Pietro Correr was capitano. They held these offices in 1641. Amelio Tagliaferri, ed., *Relazioni dei rettori veneti in Terraferma. IV Podestaria e capitanato di Padova* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1975), pp. lviii–lix.

<sup>11</sup>ASP, Santa Giustina, busta 491, fol. 67r: 'Dai quali essendo a loro concesso il libero uso del Choro alla sudetta Chiesa di Santa Giustina. dichiarano essi Sig<sup>li</sup> Canonici, per questa Concessione non intender [d'apportare] crossed out] di si faccia alcun pregiudizio alli sudetti RR. Monaci.'

this date (fifteenth-century stalls in the old church and late sixteenth-century furniture in the Renaissance basilica) there was space for the cathedral canons to perform their liturgy. Choirs were areas for functional seating and privileged viewing of the high altar, used both by the laity and other clergy and for non-devotional events such as the signing of contracts.<sup>12</sup> This liberal access to the choir area in certain circumstances could have contributed to artistic exchange between religious and secular clergy, as witnessed by contractual imitation clauses.

This thesis has also touched on the two interrelated issues of survival and chronology. Why were significantly more choir stalls constructed in the later fifteenth century than in earlier or later periods? Even acknowledging evidence of lost furniture from other periods, the Quattrocento witnessed a large corpus of stalls completed in a variety of styles. In northern Italy, few choirs survive from before 1400, and of these most date from the second half of the Trecento. However, the existence of medieval furniture is witnessed by contracts, liturgical guidelines and contemporary paintings.<sup>13</sup> Issues of wear and tear, fire or woodworm can only account for the disappearance of a limited number of stalls, as surviving examples testify to the endurance of wooden furniture.<sup>14</sup> Given their potential durability, why are there so few surviving medieval stalls?

The fifteenth-century boom in construction replaced many older stalls, which were sometimes mentioned in contracts. Reasons behind this increase in production are elusive. Aesthetically, plainly decorated medieval stalls with curved hood canopies might not have continued to appeal to Quattrocento viewers. The new technique of perspective intarsia created lucid images in logical, mathematical frameworks, reflecting broader Renaissance artistic ideals. These panels, incorporated into impressive carved structures, could have reflected the design of contemporary altarpieces in the church interior. Parallels with musical patronage of professional choirs and organs show that some churches acquired stalls as part of a general improvement of the liturgy. Additional services might have inspired improvements to choir seating: in the mid-fifteenth century, new mendicant saints were canonised and there were more *duplex* or double feasts increasing the amount of time spent

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<sup>12</sup>For example in San Zaccaria, p. 224.

<sup>13</sup>For example, the medieval choir in the Santo in Padua was cited in the contract for the stalls in Santa Maria del Carmine in Padua, dated 22 September 1383, transcribed in Sartori (1961), pp. 22–23.

<sup>14</sup>For example, the stalls in Sant'Anastasia in Verona survive in relatively good condition despite being moved twice since their construction in the 1490s.



in the choir.<sup>15</sup>

Timing could also have been a factor. As many mendicant churches were begun in the late thirteenth century and completed over a long period, they were probably equipped with simple or even temporary seating. By the Quattrocento, friars would have had the need and funds for new stalls. For example, building construction of the Frari in Venice continued into the late-fifteenth century, so any Trecento choir was likely to have been temporary or modestly decorated. On final completion of the church, the opportunity to replace the stalls may have coincided with the availability of virtuoso carving and intarsia techniques. In individual cases, churches acquired new furniture for a variety of reasons, including using funds from lay patronage or in preparation for the hosting of an important event. Although general conclusions can be attempted, each case has to be viewed separately.

Renaissance stalls have survived in significant numbers primarily because they were not replaced in later periods. In fact, after the mid-sixteenth century, surviving examples would indicate that few impressive choir precincts were built in northern Italy.<sup>16</sup> Notable exceptions include the Cassinese choirs in Santa Giustina in Padua and San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, and certain Milanese choirs including San Vittore al Corpo, which also displays carved narrative scenes. However, many later choirs lacked significant iconographic or architectural decoration. For example, whereas the fifteenth-century stalls in San Francesco della Vigna in Venice were particularly celebrated, their extant seventeenth-century replacements are of mediocre quality.<sup>17</sup> Determining exact statistics of survival from different periods is fraught with difficulties. Inevitably, art-historical literature focuses on stalls with striking iconography and decoration, particularly from the Renaissance.

Intriguingly, this later period after the mid-sixteenth century coincided with an increase in the number of choirs removed behind the high altar. Could this new arrangement have affected the importance attached to choir decoration? When choirs were prominently

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<sup>15</sup>Bonniwell noted the increase in feasts in the Dominican order. Bonniwell (1945), pp. 253–54.

<sup>16</sup>In the first half of the sixteenth century, several impressive choir precincts were built, including Lotto and Capodiferro's choir in Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. In southern Italy, several elaborate choirs were built in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Alessandra Periccioli, *L'arte del legno in Irpinia dal XVI al XVIII secolo* (Naples: Banca sannitica, 1975).

<sup>17</sup>According to Luca Pacioli, the earlier stalls were by the Canozi workshop. Markham Schulz (2003), p. 14. Dating of the later stalls is from *Venezia*, 3rd (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1985) (hereafter referred to as *Venezia* [1985]), p. 584.

situated in the nave, their decoration was seen by lay visitors to the church and enhanced the pride of the religious community and the city. However, newly built choirs behind the high altar were increasingly private spaces with restricted access. Perhaps this seclusion, together with Tridentine guidelines on the display of religious art, influenced the diminished importance placed on choir decoration.

This thesis offers several avenues of future research. Most obviously, the project could be extended to the whole of Italy. Central Italy in particular presents an extensive array of sources including surviving stalls, detailed contracts and examples of early retrochoirs. Further research could also focus on reconstructing original choir precincts in individual churches, visualising their prominent role in the division of sacred space. Motivations behind choir renovations can be investigated in greater detail, in particular the concept of returning to early-Christian church layouts. Durandus, the thirteenth-century Bishop of Mende and writer on symbolism in church buildings, noted that the word ‘choir’ originated from the disposition of singers around the altar: ‘The word *chorus* is derived from *chorea*, or from *corona*. For in early times they stood like a crown round the Altar, and thus sung the Psalms in one body’.<sup>18</sup> Durandus was obviously aware of the development of choir precincts from early apsidal seating arrangements to medieval formations in front of the high altar. Could an awareness of early-Christian arrangements, which resurfaced in Palladio’s architectural writings, have affected fifteenth- and sixteenth-century renovations?<sup>19</sup>

Building on my research into choir contracts, investigation of workshop practices could extend to the influence of guild regulations. Given their multifarious skills, which woodworking guilds did stall manufacturers belong to, and how did their guidelines affect practice?<sup>20</sup> Moreover, how did guilds react to craftsmen travelling long distances for work?

Lay access is an issue which requires further investigation, especially considering the impact of lay patronage. When local laymen financed stalls, were they granted a position in

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<sup>18</sup> John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: a translation of the first book of the Rationale divinarum officiorum, written by William Durandus* (Leeds: T. W. Green, 1843), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Isermeyer noted that Palladio referred to early-Christian choir arrangements, writing in his Fourth book on architecture: ‘si poneva con molta dignità l’altare nel suo luogo del tribunale, e il coro stava acconciamente intorno all’altare e il rimanente era libero per il popolo.’ Isermeyer (1968), p. 46. For full text, see Andrea Palladio, *I quattro libri dell’architettura*, ed. by Licisco Magagnato and Paola Marini (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1980), p. 260.

<sup>20</sup> In Venice for example, the domestic carpenters’ guild (as opposed to shipbuilders) was divided into four sections: ‘da casa’ for woodwork in buildings and light wood domestic fittings; ‘da noghera’ for non-veneered furniture; ‘da soaze’ for frames; and ‘da rimessi’ for veneers and marquetry. Richardson (2008), p. 152.

the choir? What other benefits were there for lay patrons? The amount of lay access—and the occasions on which it was granted—could alter our perceptions of the divisions of sacred space in the Renaissance church interior. The function and use of stalls was also affected by their relationship with music and acoustics. As opposed to the extensive scholarly interest in composers, research into musical performance and practice is meager, especially for earlier periods before the sixteenth century. We have seen that the patronage of music and choir furniture sometimes correlated, but did this also extend to the performance of singing? How did the design of stall canopies and their position in the church interior affect the production of sound? The findings of the recent acoustic experiments in Venetian Renaissance churches will be influential in this area.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis has sought to reestablish the importance of choir stalls in the Renaissance church interior. The analysis of religious ritual and sacred space has enabled art historians to situate painting and liturgical objects in their original functional contexts. This approach, however, has not yet fully encompassed church furnishings, which remain one of the most under-researched areas of Renaissance scholarship. Choir stalls played a central role both in the liturgy and in the segregation of clergy and laity. Yet, unlike for paintings or sculptures, liturgical guidelines gave precise instructions for their functions and uses. Contracts indicate that stalls were expensive status symbols, often imitating recently constructed furniture. While scholarship has previously overlooked Italian choir stalls, this research has shown that they were viewed as indispensable components of any great church.

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<sup>21</sup>Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti, *Sound and Space in Renaissance Venice*, Yale University Press, due for publication in October 2009.

# Appendix A

## Glossary

<b>ajouré carving</b>	<i>English</i>	pierced or perforated carving
<b>appoggiatoio</b>	<i>Italian</i>	kneeler
<b>banda</b>	<i>Italian/Venetian</i>	range or row of stalls
<b>barco</b>	<i>Italian</i>	large screen spanning the width of the nave, separating the choir from the laity
<b>basi</b>	<i>Italian</i>	foundations, floor
<b>braccialie</b>	<i>Italian</i>	arm-rests
<b>brazale</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	arm-rests
<b>cape</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	shell-niche canopies
<b>capite</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall-end
<b>cappella maggiore</b>	<i>Italian</i>	high altar chapel or apse
<b>cappelle</b>	<i>Italian</i>	professional choirs known as musical chapels
<b>cappellum</b>	<i>Latin</i>	baldacchino, canopy
<b>carpentarius</b>	<i>Latin</i>	carpenter, woodworker
<b>cassa</b>	<i>Italian</i>	organ case
<b>cassone</b>	<i>Italian</i>	large chest

<b>cathedra</b>	<i>Latin</i>	a seat or stall, more specifically the seat for the bishop
<b>cavadura</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	quadrant
<b>chorus, corus, coro</b>	<i>Latin/ Italian</i>	set of wooden choir stalls
<b>commesso di silio</b>	<i>Italian</i>	see intarsia a buio
<b>confession, confessio</b>	<i>Latin</i>	crypt chapel
<b>cornice</b>	<i>Italian</i>	cornice
<b>corridore</b>	<i>Italian</i>	screen spanning the width of the nave, separating the choir from the laity
<b>dignitaries' stalls</b>	<i>English</i>	two stalls at the entrance to the choir in rectilinear precincts, or in the centre of apsidal choirs, reserved for dignitaries
<b>erte</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	stall-divider
<b>felze</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	vaulted canopies
<b>fondamenta</b>	<i>Italian</i>	foundation, floor
<b>forma</b>	<i>Latin</i>	in Carthusian choirs, kneeler in front of stalls
<b>frisum</b>	<i>Latin</i>	border
<b>frontespicium</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall-back
<b>hand-rest</b>	<i>English</i>	carved stop at culmination of quadrant, where seated figures could rest their hands
<b>intarsia a buio, commesso di silio</b>	<i>Italian</i>	inlay of light coloured wood, often spindle-wood, into a darker matrix. Also called spindle-wood intarsia

<b>intarsia a toppo</b>	<i>Italian</i>	formed by gluing together small polyhedral wood sections of different species into a solid loaf or block, which was thinly sliced to produce identical fillets
<b>intarsia alla certosina</b>	<i>Italian</i>	inlaid work incorporating bone or mother-of-pearl in a matrix wood to create geometric patterns
<b>intestiati</b>	<i>Italian</i>	inlaid work
<b>lateral stalls</b>	<i>English</i>	in rectilinear choir precincts, stalls on the two long sides, at right angles to the return stalls
<b>lettuccio</b>	<i>Italian</i>	day-bed
<b>ligadura</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	connecting frieze
<b>ligamenti e groppi</b>	<i>Venetian/ Italian</i>	ties and knots, i.e. geometric intarsia <i>a toppo</i> decoration
<b>lista</b>	<i>Italian</i>	strip, band
<b>misericords</b>	<i>English</i>	projecting rests on the undersides of swing seats
<b>partison</b>	<i>Italian</i>	stall-divider
<b>pergolo</b>	<i>Italian</i>	pulpit
<b>pilero</b>	<i>Italian</i>	pilaster
<b>ponte, pontile, podiolus</b>	<i>Italian/ Latin</i>	literally bridge, large screen spanning the width of the nave, separating the choir from the laity
<b>prospere</b>	<i>Italian</i>	stalls, or swing-seats, or kneelers in front of stalls
<b>puzolo (poggiolo)</b>	<i>Italian</i>	organ balcony or parapet

<b>quadrant</b>	<i>English</i>	shape cut out of the lower stall-dividers between the seats, creating an arm-rest
<b>remessis</b>	<i>Latin</i>	intarsia
<b>retrochoir</b>	<i>English</i>	here used to refer to choirs placed behind the high altar
<b>return stalls</b>	<i>English</i>	stalls positioned at the west end of the precinct facing east, at right angles to the lateral stalls
<b>scagnolo</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	step
<b>screnela</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall-back
<b>seat-back</b>	<i>English</i>	slightly inclined panel at the rear of seat
<b>seat-capping</b>	<i>English</i>	between the seat-back and stall-back, it provides the main horizontal structural support and also functions as an arm-rest
<b>seat-capping elbow</b>	<i>English</i>	projecting part of the seat-capping, where standing figures could rest their elbows
<b>seçollus</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall or seat
<b>sedes</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall or seat
<b>sedilus</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall or seat
<b>sezolus</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall or seat
<b>sgabello</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	stool or seat
<b>soaza</b>	<i>Venetian</i>	moulding or border
<b>solum</b>	<i>Latin</i>	foundation, floor
<b>spalarola, spaliera, spalira</b>	<i>Italian</i>	stall-back
<b>stadium</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall or seat

<b>stall-back</b>	<i>English</i>	large rectangular panel between the seat-capping and canopy base, often filled with intarsia or tracery designs
<b>stall-end</b>	<i>English</i>	sides of the termini stalls, often with decorative carvings
<b>stall-divider</b>	<i>English</i>	panel, often carved with foliage or tracery, which separates one stall from another
<b>stallus</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall
<b>standard</b>	<i>English</i>	panels separating one seat from another
<b>straforia</b>	<i>Latin</i>	pierced carving or tracery
<b>studiolo</b>	<i>Italian</i>	private room in a nobleman's palace for study, business and entertaining guests
<b>substalls</b>	<i>English</i>	stalls on the lower row of the precinct
<b>suolo</b>	<i>Italian</i>	foundation, floor
<b>terminal stalls</b>	<i>English</i>	stalls situated at the end of each upper and lower row
<b>testa</b>	<i>Italian</i>	stall-end
<b>testale</b>	<i>Latin</i>	stall-end
<b>tramezzo</b>	<i>Italian</i>	large screen spanning the width of the nave, separating the choir from the laity
<b>tribuna</b>	<i>Italian</i>	tribune, vaulted apse
<b>volticciuole</b>	<i>Italian</i>	small vault
<b>voltum</b>	<i>Latin</i>	vault



## Appendix B

# Documents

The following translations are by the author. An English summary only is provided for the San Zaccaria contract, given its length and extensive discussion in the main text.

### B.1 Matteo Colacio: *La Laus Prospettivae*

Transcription from Chiara Savettieri, ‘La ‘Laus perspectivae’ di Matteo Colacio e la fortuna critica della tarsia in area veneta’, *Ricerche di storia dell’arte* 64 (1998), pp. 17–20. Dated to c. 1475.

Videntur illa mihi vera omnia. Non possum cito credere ficta esse. Accedo propius, duco per omnia manum. Regressus deinde circueo gradatim intuens diligentissime singula. Videntur mihi libri, ut a re magis nota quattidieque visa incipiam, veris veriores: alius super alium, ut casu incuriave fieri solet, non aequati, alius itein clausus, nova compaginatura alius claudi non posse, ut varietate magis vestrum eluceret ingenium. Candelae cereae albis filo verticibus in ligneis teretibusque vasis: alia recta, alia inclinata, alia alia inclinatio, inter eas alia transversa, omnes in composito ordine inter se haerentes ut, suapte natura, ubi non sunt frequentes fieri solet.

Videntur item novorum caminorum vertices fumo nigrescere; ex vasis cumulo persica poma labi, angustia cellulae cithara mediaforas extare. Cavea illa virgea miro est artificio contexta, circulo ligneo pulcherrime eius medio et extremis circumducto, eique filis aeneis colore, quantitate, convexa forma intertextis;

vertice in angustum iunctis ligneaeque testutini infixis foris cornu aeneo filo cinctum, intus escae vasculum et purpureus orbiculus in ludum avis pendet. Ibi discolor avis vivat necne dubios homines tenet.

Aedes, templa, cum campanis turres fornicum fenestrarumque umbris, testudinibus, surgentibus item gradibus cum etiam inclinatis foribus vacua videri. Montibus item vestris cum haerbis, sparsis lapidibus, alicubi discolore terra, haerba alicubi non vestita, ut veri videantur nihil adimi nihil adi potest. Quadrata superficie aedem videri astare inspicientem transversam fores ostendere in longumque porrigi.

Sed quid de vultibus illorum sanctorum dicam? quid de impexa flexuosaque barba? quid de manibus et articulis digitorum unguibusve? quid de bucca et illis eius dentibus? quid de eorum paliis, retortis plicis et umbris? Videntur omnia veriora pulchrioraque veris. Orbiculi illi albi in coronam circumtexti sub mento divi Perdocimi fuere mihi delectationi non parvae. Sed illis circa angelum Gabrielem piissimamque Matrem, cum frondibus fructibusque, ramis natura veriores, colore forma quantitate, non producit. Sed illud mirum, quod his ramis folia languent ut illis qui hesterno die sint ab arbore matre succisi. Quis scannellum illud primo gradu subter miserantissimam Matrem planum quadratum inque aspicientem porrectum pedibusve suffultum negaret?

Lignea vascula in plana superficie rotunda sphericaque forma videri. Quis illud super calicem sericum, colore, raritate texturae, purpureis lineis et circa eas angustioribus pluribusve nigris intertextis plicis, pendentibus inaequaliter capitibus, discoloribus diversa facie videndis, satis admirari posset? Nec aliter verum filium quam vestrum parvis flexibus neque veriore umbra ex archa saepe pendere videmus. Gallia, aeris cudendi ducendique dedala, veriora candelabra vestris in Italiam numquam misit. Quis unquam crederet circularem planamque superficiem quantum os calicis est, seu paululo plus, totum calicem in longum iacentem et ipsum concavum videri posse?

Planam, poliendi ligni instrumentum, per ulnam fere videri asurgentem ex armarii loculo extare magnae mihi admirationi fuisse.

Illo incendendi thuris argenteo vasculo, quod vulgo thuribulum dicunt, verius molliusve cum argenteis nodis argentarius faber excuderet duceretque nemo. Citharis item vestris, distinctis asserum compagibus, testudine elevata, reflexis collis, ligneis sensoribus chordarum cum ipsis chordis, veriores pulchriorisque iacere numquam vidi.

Sed indumentum illus lineum angeli Gabrielis, rara textura, lineae talae colore, plicis, plicarum umbris, lineamentis denique omnibus, quae mens? quod ingenium?, cuius eloquentia laudando satis admirari posset?

...Videtur illud opus non vestrum, sed naturae. Habet umbras longiores brevioresve, crassiores seu tenuiores ut uniuscuiusque rei sua natura postulat. Quod vix pingi colore potest, vos ligno finxistis. Hinc vestrum apparet ingenium; hinc illa rerum naturae cognitio, hoc summa vos tollit laude; hinc famae immortalis spes; haec maxime admirantur excellenti ingenio viri.

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It all seems real to me. I cannot easily believe it to be an illusion. I approach nearer, I draw my hand along everything. Having stepped back, next I turn around little by little looking very attentively at each thing. That I may start from more familiar things seen almost every day: there seem to me to be books, more real than real ones: some resting above others, as usually happens by chance or through carelessness, conversely others are closed, others cannot close because they are newly bound, so that by variety your genius shines more clearly. Wax candles with white wicks standing erect are in rounded wooden holders: some straight, others inclined, one more inclined than another, between them others are horizontal, all remaining in an irregular order among themselves, scattered in a natural manner.

Likewise the fires of new chimneys are seen with dark smoke rising; peaches fall down from piles in vases, a lute half projects from a narrow niche. That cage made from twined twigs is a wonderful illusion, a wooden circle very beautifully goes around its middle and lowest parts, and to its many strands of bronze colour are interwoven in convex forms; at the top at the narrow point a wooden

covering with connected openings is fixed surrounded by a bronze strand (?); within there is a food container and a purple orb which is hanging for a bird to play with. There the variegated bird holds men in doubt as to whether it is alive or not.

Buildings, churches, with arched belltowers, towers of vaulted buildings and shadows in the windows, vaults and ascending stairs, also with open doors, seem empty. Likewise your mountains with vegetation and stones scattered around, the earth in different colours in some places, in other places not covered by vegetation, so that they seem real. Nothing can be removed or added. Buildings with square surfaces are seen rising up, revealing doors when viewed diagonally, and extending far into the distance.

But what am I to say about the faces of those saints? what about their unruly, curly beards? what of the knuckles and nails of their hands? what of their mouths and those teeth of his ? what of the twisted folds and shadows of their clothing? It all seems to me more real and more beautiful than reality. Those white curls woven in a garland under the chin of saint Prosdocius gave me a great deal of pleasure. But those branches around the angel Gabriel and the most pious Madonna, with foliage and fruits: nature does not produce such branches in colour and form. But what is amazing is that these branches droop with leaves in the same way as those which were cut from the mother tree yesterday. Who may deny that flat, square stool the first step of which supports the feet of the most merciful Madonna, which extends into the viewers' gaze?

Round and spherical wooden vessels appear on a flat surface. Who could admire enough that silk cloth above the chalice with its colour, delicate texture, pattern of purple lines with many narrower black lines between them, interwoven folds, ends hanging down unevenly, appearing to change colour in different views?

Nor do we often otherwise see thread with small twists hanging down as true as yours, or with truer shadows from boxes. France, being cunning in forging and sculpting in bronze, has sent a more believable candelabra than yours to Italy. Who may ever believe the flat and circular surface of the mouth of the

chalice, or that by a very little more, the whole chalice lying down lengthways so that its inside can be seen?

A plane, an instrument for filing wood, is seen coming out of a small cupboard by almost a cubit [ell], exciting greatly my admiration.

For that silver container for the burning of incense, commonly called a thurible: no silversmith could a truer or softer one with silver chains. Likewise I have never seen truer or more beautiful lutes lying down than yours, with their wooden sounding boards for strings with the strings themselves.

But that linen garment of the angel Gabriel, with its delicate texture, such an exact linen colour, folds, shadows in the folds, the draughtsmanship of everything: which mind, what genius, whose extolling eloquence could admire it sufficiently?

... That work does not seem yours but nature's. It has shadows which are longer, shorter, thicker and thinner as the nature of every single thing demands. Because what can scarcely be painted in colour, you represented with wood. From this your genius appears; from this that knowledge [of yours] of the nature of things, this raises you with highest praise, from this the hope of immortal fame; men very much admire this for your great genius.

## B.2 Praise for Fra Giovanni da Verona

Transcription from Giovanni Brizzi, ‘Un armadio intarsiato della scuola di Fra Giovanna da Verona nel Metropolitan Museum of Art di New York’, *Benedictina* 16, no. 2 (1969), p. 296n.

Hic obiter eius artis superexcellentem peritiam percenseam., omnium quicumque huius artificii scientiam habuerunt praestantissimus habebatur. Perinde ut facultatem consequendae artis nulli praebitam omnibus ereptam credas, quippe ut alii vivos de marmore aut aere vultus ducere soliti nomen et perhennem gloriam indepti sunt, pari modo et hic de lignorum versicoloribus filis ac festucis quoscunque voluisses tam animalium quam hominum vultus exacte et examus-sim compaginabat et componebat aulaea ut acu depicta crederes divino ingenio praedita, non sine omnium admiratione concinne admodum variabat. Cardueles et id genus aviculas adfabre adeo ligno adpingebat, ut sensum plerumque fallerent, nemine non coloratas esse credente. Porro palatia et inumbrationes efficere folia erant artis, cuius elegantia nunquam delendae memoriae Iulius II pont. max. Ioannem praedictum magnis premiis et pollicitationibus evocatum, ut sibi perystilium simili opere elaboraret obtinuit. Praeoptarunt et alii ante ipsum optimates et proceres suorum aliquid operum habere apud se gestientes ... Nam quotidie in arte aliquantum promovebat.

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In this matter by the way, I may review the most excellent skill of his art: he was held to be the foremost of all who had knowledge of this art. So that you may believe the ability to accomplish this art has been granted to none, stolen from all, certainly as others had obtained perpetual glory and famous names by making lifelike faces from marble or bronze, in the same way, whatever you might have wished, he precisely and exactly joined together and elegantly composed and completely varied faces of both humans and animals from the fibres and stalks of differently coloured woods, so that you may have believed that tapestries painted by needle were endowed with divine spirit. He painted little goldfinches and birds of that kind onto wood in such a way that they

very often deceived the senses, no one believing them not to be coloured. Next making palaces, shadows and leaves were part of his art, because of which elegance, Pope Julius II of eternal memory obtained of the aforesaid Giovanni summoned with great rewards and promises, that he would decorate his private quarters [perystilium] with similar works. Other noblemen and princes before him [i.e. the pope] had chosen [him] before, being very eager to have something of his works... For everyday he advanced a great deal in art.

### B.3 Seating arrangements in Parma Cathedral

Archivio di Stato Parma, Arca B, cass. 17, doc. 160, 1<sup>o</sup>, 14 January 1516, ‘Constituzioni di Alessandro Farnese per la disciplina del clero della diocesi di Parma’, transcribed in Pier Luigi Bagatin, *Le Pitture Lignee di Lorenzo e Cristoforo da Lendinara* (Treviso: Antilia, 2004), p. 281.

Ante inchoatum *Gloriam in excelsis Deo* in missa, et finem primi psalmi in matutinis, vespers et aliis horis, albis indutis, chorum ingrediantur, et servato ordine infrascripto quilibet in sede sua et stallo resideat, ut Archipresbyter in prima sede corni dextri superioris chori; Archidiaconus vero in prima cornu sinistri. Prepositus in secunda dextri. Antiquior autem canonicus in secunda sinistri. Et sic sucessionem gradatim, omnes canonici iuxta receptionis suae ordinem. Post ultimum vero canonicum cornu dextri primicerius et post ultimum canonicum cornu sinistri sacrista sive custos; post primicerium autem primus guardachorus; secundus vero post sacristam qui officio suarum hebdomadarum expleto, ad quietis locum mereantur ascendere; quos mansionari mansionarios autem hebdomadarii non dissimile ordine subsequantur. In primo vero sede cornu dextri inferioris chori, resideat guardachorus, qui ea hebdomada officium peragere tenetur. Sequens vero in prima sinistri cornu, post guardachorum, dogmani, qui ob chori ornatum et tamquam purae et candidae fidei dogma docentes almutias ex albis pellibus deferant. Post dogmanos vero antiquior presbyter, et deinde caeteri successive similiter et gradatim ut supra, iuxta ordinem receptionis suae. Post ultimum vero presbyterum, diaconi. Post ultimum diaconum subdiaconi simili ordine sedant. Ceteri autem inferiores clerici, extra sedes et subsellia stent, si tamen episcopalem sedem transfert, et subsellia mutari contingerit. Archipresbyter in prima post sedem episcopalem. Archidiaconus vero in prima alterius cornu, et alii successione gradatim ut supra resideant.

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Before beginning *Gloria in excelsis Deo* in mass, and before the end of the first psalm in matins, vespers and the other hours, wearing albs, they should enter



the choir, and in observing the order written below each one should sit down in his seat and stall: the Archpresbyter in the first seat on the right of the upper choir; moreover the Archdeacon in the first on the left. The steward (*prepositus*) in the second on the right. And the older canon in the second on left. And thus gradually in a succession, all the canons according to the order of their reception. Moreover the *primicerius* after the last canon on the right side and the sacristan or custodian after the last canon on the left side; and the first guardachorus after the *primicerius*; moreover after the sacristan the second guardachorus who having performed office of his hebdomadarians may deserve to rise to the place of rest; and the hebdomadarian mansonaries should follow those mansonaries in a not dissimilar order. Moreover in the first seat on the right side of the lower choir the guardachorus should sit, who is required to complete the office that week. Moreover following the first of the left side, after the guardachorum, the dogmani, who for the adornment of the choir wear white fur almutia, as if teaching the dogma of the pure and white faith. Moreover after the dogmani the elder priest, and then the rest successively, similarly and gradually as above, according to the order of their reception. Then after the last priest, deacons. After the last deacon subdeacons sit in a similar order. But the other inferior clerics should stand outside the seats and benches if however he transports the bishop's seat, and the benches should happen to be changed. The archpresbyter first after the bishop's seat. Moreover, the Archdeacon first on the other side, and others gradually should sit in succession as above.

## B.4 San Francesco in Brescia: 1451 document

Dated 11 May 1451, in ASBr, ASC, busta 495, fol. 211v. Partially transcribed in Valentino Volta et al., *La chiesa e il convento di San Francesco d'Assisi in Brescia* (Brescia: Banca San Paolo di Brescia, 1994), p. 319.

Verum quia videbat et consideruverat hanc ecclesiam Sancti Francisci forte ninus parvam et incapacem populi, qui devote illam visitat et maxime in exercitio et tempore predicationis deliberavit cum consensu omnium fratrum e civium condati supra(?) fuerunt per consiliaris et adiutoribus ampliare tantum capellam grandum quod in ipsa possint fieri sedes seu corus pro fratribus et etiam stare altare grande, sicut est capella Santi Johannis quam vidit noviter facta, et destruere et amovere dambulantorium quod intermediat dictam ecclesiam et apportare etiam corum presentem. Ita quod ecclesia remaneat tota vacua e expedita a porta usque ad capellam grandem.

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Indeed he sees and may consider this church of San Francesco of the minor friars too small and incapacious for the people who devotedly visit it, especially in the practice and time of preaching, he deliberated with the agreement of all the friars and citizens and assistants that were brought together to consult to enlarge the cappella maggiore, so much that the seats or choir for the friars can be made in it, and also [that] the high altar can remain, just as the chapel of San Giovanni which one sees newly done, and to destroy and move the walkway (*dambulantem*) which divides said church into two, and also to remove the present choir. So that the church may remain completely empty and clear from the door up to the cappella maggiore.

## B.5 San Francesco in Brescia: 1463 document

Dated 7 July 1463. ASBr, ASC 500, 39v. Partially transcribed in Volta et al. (1994), p. 319.

Cum per venerabilem dictum guardianum Sancti Francisci expositum fuisset quod cum pro ornamento et amplitudine ecclesie sue amoveri fecerint capellas et pontile quae mediabant ecclesiam ut habilius et comodius inibi predicari possit. Et cum etiam corum et sedes suas in capella magna locari facere decreverint ut ecclesia ipsa magna capax esset quod de gratia et divino munere eidem fabrice aliquod subsiduum nomine procutorio [proprio?] porrigeretur etc. Captum est nemine discrepante quod eidem fabrice dentur in subsiduum libre centum presentum et quod etiam ipsi fabrice et dispensationi ipsarum librarum centu presens spectabiles viri domini Franciscus de Caltegnolis, Aloiusius Stella et Hyeronimus de Calzaveliis.

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Since through the said venerable guardian of San Francesco it was explained that for the ornament and enlarging of their church they will move [or had moved] the chapels and pontile which divided the church into two, so that one can preach more conveniently and comfortably in there (the church). And also they have decided to place the choir and its seats in the large (high altar) chapel so that the church may be very large and spacious, that from the divine grace and service for the same building work some assistance in the name of the procurator(?) should be offered. It was decided no one disagreeing that for the same building work be given in assistance 100 lire and that also for that building work and distribution of that 100 lire are present the notable men Franciscus de Caltegnolis, Aloiusius Stella and Hyeronimus de Calzaveliis.

## B.6 Santa Corona in Vicenza: 1479 document

Dated 15 January 1479, in which the friars request fifty ducats from the *Collegio dei Notai*. Transcribed in Domenico Bortolan, *S. Corona. Chiesa e convento dei Domenicani in Vicenza. Memorie storiche* (Vicenza: Editrice S. Giuseppe, 1889), pp. 230–31.

Sanctissimae Coronae Domini Nostri Iesu Christi conventus prior et fratres cernentes utriusque sexus civium turmas summo Creatori vota orthodoxe reddituras in eorum Ecclesiam catervatim congregari locique angustiam et implexitatem tam divo obsequio non minimum dispendium... solliciti semper rem Altissimo gratam populoque vicentino non minus honorificam impendere quod jam longo tempore universe urbi desideratum est sumptuosi operis capellae majoris aedificium non indecorum quod superiori anno ope atque auxilio hujus magnificae comunitatis, collegiorum et aliorum piorum virorum initiatum est perficere decreverunt videlicet de Ecclesiae medio sublato choro caeteraque iter medium occupantia liberum et spatiosum populo praestet habitaculum quod profecto et ad Dei laudem cedet et gloriam contentumque ac totius urbis commodum et honorem.

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The convent, prior and friars of the Santa Corona of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that crowds of citizens of both sexes were to give orthodox prayers to the great Creator gathering in companies in their church, and that narrowness and tortuousness of the space [created] no small inconvenience... always eager to carry out a thing agreeable to the Most High and no less honourable to the Vicentine people since for a long time the whole city has desired the not unsightly building of the expensive work of the cappella maggiore, they decided to finish that which the previous year was started because of the help and support of this great community, college and other pious men, namely the choir having been removed from the middle of the church, and that the rest of what occupies the middle way provide a free and spacious inhabitation for the people, which will give honour to God and glory, contentment, advantage and honour to the whole city.

## B.7 Santa Corona in Vicenza: 1482 document

Agreement between Dominican friars and Count Palmerio Sesso, 21 April 1482. ASVi, CRS, Santa Corona, busta 132, no. 53.

Ad laudem, et gloriam domini nostri jesu christi crucifixi de accutissimus spinis coronae suae accerbissimae passionis, in ipsa ecclesia, inter alias sanctorum memorandas reliquias extant, una spina suo innocentismo, et preciosissimo sanguine tanti semper variis miraculis corruscans, nec non ad splendorem, et nittorem huius magis urbis considerantes maximas predictae ecclesiae Angustias non posse tantum populum nimia in dies affluentes et pregravante multitudine, capere, afflati divino numine, constituerunt templi ipsi formas dilatare, fundamentaque iecere in amplitudinem et ellanantiam capelle Altaris, ut in ea amplitudine posito choro, et structo altari, totum ipsi ecclesiae corpus vacuum, permeabile populo permaneret. Quod sane non ad dei solum, et ecclesiae decus, et gloriam, sed etiam ad ipsius civitatis caderet ornamento, ac illustrationem, ceteram quia hoc opus quippe sanctum, non parvam. poscebat impensam maiorem, autem eo confecto permitebat suo populo devotionem, et gratiam apud Deum.

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Existing a thorn in this church from among the very severe thorns of the crown of his very bitter passion, shining with most precious blood so much that there are always various miracles, amongst other relics of the saints to be remembered, to the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified and also to the splendour and beauty of this wonderful city, considering [that] the extreme narrowness of the aforesaid church cannot contain so many people flooding in day by day and being weighed down by crowds, inspired by divine will, they decided to expand the form of that church, to lay foundations to enlarge and elongate the altar chapel, so that the choir having been placed in that large space and the altar having been built, the whole body of the church itself could remain empty [and] permeable to people. This would be not only for the honour and glory of God and the church, but also for the adornment of the city itself, moreover because this not small and certainly holy work required great expense;

however by its completion it will allow devotion for its people and grace with God.

## B.8 Contract for the choir stalls of San Zaccaria in Venice

From ASV, San Zaccaria, Pergamene 1, unnumbered sheet at date 26 March 1455, transcribed by the author. I am very grateful to Gary Radke for showing me his notes on this document. Indecipherable or ambiguous words are shown in italics.

In Christi nomine Amen. Anno eisdem nativitatis millesimo quadrigessimo quinquegessimo quinta indictione terzia die vigesimo sexto marzii veneciis in monasterio Sancti Zacharie presentibus testibus ad hoc vocatis et rogatis nobilibus viris domino Georgio Valaresso quondam domini vertove de contrada Sancti Martiis, domino Lucha Manneo quondam domini Johannis de contrada Sancti Proculi et Ser Ulix de Aliotus *canzellarum Serorum* ducalis domini venier de contrada Sancti Marini *e aliis* Et cum pro honori et utilite monasterii Sancti Zacharie de Veneciis reverenda domina domina Marina Donado abbatissa prefacti monasterii et infrascripte moniales videlicet Soror Agnexano Justiniano priorisa, Soror Vesa Venerio, Soror Vesa Honoranda, Soror Novella Baduerio, Soror Marina Badieria, Soror Marina Sustola, Soror Blancha Bragandina, Soror Magdalena Bragandina, Soror Marina Magno, Soror Cecilia Magno, Soror Margarita de Masto, Soror Margerita Donado, Soror Lena de Priolis, Soror Lucia Donado, Soror Samaritana Marcello. Condinnate et comunate sono dicti pannelle in palatorio seu in loquatorio quem locum prefatam dominam abbatissa et dicte monialis elligerunt pro sue ydoneo et honesto loro ad hunc etum perfendum se deliberanerunt facere una corum in ecclesia dicti monasterii Sancti Zacharie. Et eadem di causu prefacta domina abbatissa et dicte sue moniales ut supra existentes et non plures quis haberent *vecem* in dicto capitulo ut ipse assiserunt venerunt ad concordum et compositionem cum magistro Francistro de Vixentra filio quondam Zampetri incixore e intagliatore lignaminus de contrada Sancti Marine. Et cum magistro Marcho eius fratre pro faciendo *dictum* corum *supradictum* (?) et prout ibi *infermis* (?) continent. Et oraxione dicte compositionis et *concordum* (?) facte et factorum inter ipsius plus predicti magistro Francisius et magistro Marchus fratres principaliter et insolidum obligando se et sua bona presentia et futura per se suos quod reliques et

heredes promiserunt prefato domine abbatisse et dictis monialibus presentibus suprascriptis e *reapt* (?) suis in omnibus propriis in nomine et vice dicti sancti monasterii et totius capitoli e conventus eiusdem servire attendere observare et adimplire *s..(?)* et prout in infrascriptis capitolis et conventabilis continent. Cuiusquidem captorum pactorum et conventionum tenorum sequitur sub hac forma videlicet

**iesus christus**

### **Condizione del coro se de fare nela giexia de San Zacharia**

Primo le prospere innante ale sedie et il suolo dabasso cum el suo scagnolo davanti e di sovra a le dito prospere uno pocho di suolo lassando tutti quei spazii varii dove se intra nel coro che gli sera ordinato essendo le dite prospere cum suo tarsie e suoli di quella bonta e de legname e di essere comesso como e elavoro posto nela capella di la giexia di Santa Lena sonzongendo che le predicate prospere siano facte meza queta di brazo piu large di quelle di Santa Lena e dentro aquele gli armarii cum le sue portelle dove se aloga i libri.

Nela sedia de suolo fina albrazale conforme aquelli di Santa Lena di ogni bona e condizione excepto che la cavadura sotto el brazale di essere schieta e in faza una colonella tarsiada almodo di Santa Lena sopra questa uno fiore o vero foglia che sopravanza nella cavadura.

El brazale dela grosseza e bonta di quello di Santa Lena el qual vadi ligando come quello e sopra el dito brazalle una soaza sufficiente e lavora el quale similimente vadi ligando nella spalera e atorno el fogliame dele erte.

Il foliame dele erte azonzeno dal brazal fina sotto el felze vole essere de ligname neto e di grosseza asufficientia et le dicte foglie di bonta conforme al altro lavoro e migliore che il fogliame posto in una sedia nela giexia di Santa Foscha e di quella o piu grosseza.

Le conditione de la spaliera di dredo idest: le soaze tarseade il foame pro junctorii di larcho et in mezo le tarsie ligamenti e groppi simille et ogni altra



cossa contignuda nela spaliera del coro di Santa Lena excepto che il traforo posto in quella che non se intenda essere facto in questo lavoro, dichiarando impero che lo exemplo deli predicti ligamenti de tarsie se intenda simile ale prime sedie cinque per banda del coro de Santa Lena overo altri ligamenti che non se diminuischa di quella bonta e perfectione.

Segua sotto el felze de sopra ala spaliera et atorno el foame dele erte una ligadura di archeti similmente ligando come quelli di San Zanipolo a sempo de quelli.

El felze ala volta che e quello di Santa Lena et per ogni sedia sotto el dito felze una marcha de soaza tarsiada simile e di bonta e de grandezza cum le soaze datorno a quella di Santa Lena e dentro a quella marcha uno fazo relevado el quale impia el campo dela dita marcha.

De sopra in faza del felze uno frixo de nogara largo uno dido grosso piu di quello che e nela spaliera atraverso del coro de San Zanipolo e di quella bonta e neteza el qual foame zaxa fra doe cornixe bene proportionade alavoro e la cornixe de sopra dimostri uno compimento di grossezza et aptitudini come bixogna et sopra in faza dele dite doe cornixe che il sia uno frixo de tarsia de iusta e de bonta sufficiente.

Tutto el soprascripto lavoro convien essere de nogara excepto dove la cadera nele prospere et nel suolo di larxe et in altro logi contignudi nel coro di Santa Lena el qual ligname et cussi il comete di quello cum tutti soi adornamenti quanto el sera in opera chel non sia extimado di mancho bonta di quello sia dito di sopra el coro di Santa Lena.

**Et ultra predicta etiam Infrascripta et promissiones debent  
containeri in parte compositone fare seu marchato quorum tenor  
sequitur sub hac forma videlicet. Pacti e promissione di essere  
contigundi nel marchado**

Che tutta la spexa de legname maistranza tarsie feramenta bastaxi e indifferent ogni altra spexa che seguira per questo coro excepto ori e colori debia essere

facta a spexe del maistro alqual solamente se gie de dare ducati x. doro per sedia et altro che quel pagamento non sia obligado affar el monasterio negli termini contignudi qui sotto salvo che compido tutto el lavoro domente el se mettera in cura in giexia el dito monasterio se obliga dare pan e vin al dito maistro et a chi lavora cum lui fina el sera fornido de meterlo in cura.

La quantita di le sedie cum la mixura dela largeza e alteza e le *occupe* (?) del fogliame e la forma del coro per junctori sia ad beneplantia dele done e intendasse fare marchado de le sedie compide acadra in tutto el dito coro *e non* (?) de le meze sedie dala feriada nela sedia de madona la badessa.

El monestero fara obligacium de la sarsi constrenzere il castaldo suo sopra i beni del monasterio e il dito castaldo in specialita sopra i suoi beni ad ogni judicio del danno aspectara a questo non attendendo agli pacti et promissione e fate.

Obligasse el monasterio da pasqua proxima a mexi dui de fare una sedia totalmente compida come la dovera stare in opera laqual piaxendo ale done che cusi el siegua dredo et non piaxendo quamquam lavesse facto el suo debito che vogliendo le done azonzerere overo smenoire lavoro che cussi pro rata el sia azonto e smenoido prixiu continuando pero el lavoro. Et innanti chel principia affare la dita sedia habia pro caparo de soa manufactura pro tuto el coro ducati vinti e da poi che tuto el legname sera comprando e posto nel magazin del monasterio essendo compida la dita sedia habia altri ducati octanta et el resto del pagamento siegua pro terzo idest el terzo lavorato che sia mita del legame e uno terzo quando el sia tuto lavorato pro meterlo in opera e del resto compido che sia de tute conditione.

E che el legname senza induxia sia comprado subito passato idui mexi che sera fata la sedia *ercti* (?) fieri *chiencado* (?) al comprare del qual niuna dele parte non se possi dare alguna prolungatione anzi abiasse una parte cum laltra actione se che el se compra e pro alogare quello debia essere dado almaistro uno magazin et etiam habia loco sufficiente et comodo di potere lavorare et fare lavorare ad alterii.

I denari costera et soprascripto ligname siano continuo apparecchiati per pagarlo nele mani del monasterio il qual se dovera diffalcare del suo pagamento de ducati .x. pro sedia impero che tuto se de fare a suo spexe.

Volse seguerta de i denari se exbursera de tempo in tempo et cussi la segurta e il maestro siano obligati insolidum a tute promesse et la seguerta insieme sotto zuxa a tutte obligatione et pacti i quali anchora prometta di supplire et satisfacere ala suprascripta obligatione.

Che fato la sedia el sia comprado e ligname comprado chel sia el se gie dia principio a lavorarlo e seguasse lavorando si che senza excusatione ne altra contradicione el possi essere compido fra termino de dui anni principia da poi comprado elegname e non attendando al termene chel monasterio possa tore uno opiu maistri e farlo compire a suo spexe cum ogni celerita alaqual spexa si del danno che seguira come di ogni altro interesse e spexa sia el maestro ela seguerta nelfare e satisfacere fina a compimento non possendo essere messo lite ne contradicione al monasterio de tuta la spexa el fara per compire el dito coro. Renunciantes dicte partes exceptioni non facto dicte compositionis pactorum suprascriptorum et non celebrati partis conctis exceptioni doli mali actioni in factioni e conditioni sine causa unum quod alii exceptioni suo juri et legum auxilio sibi competenti ut competituro. Constituentes e puritentes dicte partes sibi ad *jurarum* attendintur et observantur omnia et singula in pacti instromento iusta. Et refiare et restruire pro inixerunt dicte partes sibi ad *jurarum* omnia e singula damna e expensus que e quas una pars varii altrius et alta virii altrius fuerut ut hint in causa et extima pro suprascriptis omnibus firmitorum attendendis et observandis credendo una partes alti e altra alti de damnis et expensis suo *ido* et simpluri *xbo* sine honore sui sarei ut alia testium probatione. Et pro predictis omnibus et singlis conveniri *realiter* et personaliter. *Venent fran* conome mantue padue et vene. Et convaliter in anni alio loco terra castro et faro diebus feriatis e non feriatis feriis aliquibus non obstantibus presentibus ut futuris quibus sponte *veniranerunt* expulse. Et pro *mundunt* non se appelire ab aliqua sentenza in lata foret *cont* ipsios ut

aliquem ipsorum omnibus pactis. Et mitta *constrinii* exceptionis juris ut pacti dicte ut opponem quominus ad suprascripta omnia offirmatir tenentur. Et pactibis e instantia prefacti monasterio San Zacharie e reverendissima domine domine Marine Donado abbatisse dicti monasterio et totius capitoli e conventus *causle*. Ser Iohannes Benedicti *eius* monasterii castaldo et in sua sponalite promixit et extitut fideiussor de omnibus contentis in suprascriptis pactis e conventionibus ac compositionibus supermis descriptis permittens e obligans se e sua bona presentia e futura attende e observire omnia suprascripta. Et pactibus et instantia dictorum magistri Francisci e magistri Marci fratribus supra de scriptorum magistri Jacobus Antony Batistagno de contrada San Salvator de Venetis promixit et extitut fideissor in omnibus et pro omnia sui continentur suprascriptorum pactorum e compositionium pertinentium ad dictes fratres de illo quod hut *et litere* (?).

Renunciantes dicti fideissoribus infino de fideissoribus que omnia e singula suprascripta predicte partes principalis e insolidum obligando promiserunt attendere observare et adimplere e non contifare per se ut alius eorum nominibus modo aliquo roi nol de jure ut defra sub pena et obligatorum omnorum suorum bonorum presentorum e futurorum.

Ego Nicolaus filius quondam domini Leonis de fantis imperiali quarte notaris presentis huius omnibus suprascriptis pactis fui ea quod rogatum stabere stripsi.

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On 26 March 1455, in the convent of San Zaccaria in Venice, in the presence of three witnesses (Giorgio Valaresso, Luca Manneo and Ulixé de Alioti), the abbess Marina Donato in the presence of fifteen nuns commission the woodworkers Francesco and Marco quondam Zampetri from Vicenza to make a choir in their church, with the following conditions.

The prospere must be arranged to leave various spaces to enter the choir, and must be like some in the chapel of Sant'Elena, except they should be larger and have cupboards for storing books. The stalls up to the arm-rests should be the same as those in Sant'Elena except that the cavadura should have a

colonette with a flower or leaf ornament. The arm-rests should be the same as those in Sant'Elena with a moulding above, which should also go around the stall-back and stall-dividers. The foliate stall-dividers should be like a stall in Santa Fosca. The stall-backs should have intarsia decoration like those in Sant'Elena, but should not have tracery, but rather the intarsia of the first five seats in Sant'Elena. Under the canopies, there should be a frieze of small arches similar to the stalls in Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The vaulted canopies should be like those in Sant'Elena, with a moulding beneath. Above the canopies a walnut frieze should be larger than one in Santi Giovanni e Paolo. All of the above work should be in walnut except where the prospere are placed and the floor of larch. In every other respect the choir should be similar to the one in Sant'Elena.

All the wood and tools should be paid for by the masters, except for gold and coloured paints, and they will be paid ten ducats per stall. The monastery is obliged to provide food and wine. The quantity of seats will be decided by the nuns. Within two months from Easter the craftsmen are obliged to produce a complete seat, for the judgement of the nuns. If satisfactory, the craftsmen will receive a deposit of twenty ducats, with which they can purchase wood and store it in the convent's depository. The rest of the payment will be made in three installments. The craftsmen will be given adequate space for their workshop. The choir must be completed in two years, and if the work overruns then the convent can employ more craftsmen at the original craftsmen's expense.

The choir will be examined and the craftsmen are obliged to remake any parts of it at their own expense. The convent names their gastaldo, Giovanni Benedetto, as guarantor, and the craftsmen Giacomo Antonio Batistagno. The contract is signed by the notary Nicolaus quondam Leonis de Fantis.

## B.9 Polidoro's description of the Santo Choir

Valerio Polidoro, *Delle religiose memorie della chiesa di S. Antonio di Padova*, Venice (1590), transcribed in Bernardo Gonzati, *La basilica di S. Antonio di Padova* (Padua 1852), p. 67n.

(Chapter VIII, p.6) Da tre parti cioè da quella che incontra l'altar maggiore, dalla destra e sinistra è chiuso più che per metà con quadra figura di fuori, benchè nel resto ch' è la sua parte di dentro sia circondato in giro da otto colonne... E queste lasciano brevi distanze dall'una all'altra che rimangono chiuse da certe grate di ferro di molti piccioli pezzi, con tal maniera insieme legati che formano varietà di bellissimi fori per i quali si può dentro agevolmente vedere.

(Chapter XVIII, p. 14r) Dalla porta principale sua, ugualmente discendendosi, fino all'altre due, è rinchiuso il Choro della Chiesa del Santo, da vaga diversità di varie pietre, e bronzi: imperò che ventiquattro Pilastrì dieci de' quali sono di pietra bianca, e quattordici di rossa, ben disposti, e fermati sopra continua base bianca, incassata di rosso, lasciano venti uguali distanze, otto delle quali sono empìte di pietra rossa che nella parte più alta hanno neri incassamenti lustrissimi circondati di bianco ornamento di marmo, e dodici empìte pur di marmo, mostrano di sopra altritanti quadri di bronzo, assai grandi, che rappresentano alcune sacre istorie del Testamento vecchio.

L'altezza di questa chiusura del Choro ascende a piedi undici, havendo nello spacio suo tanto vaghi quanto varii incassamenti, di teste d'Angeli alate, di bronzo, dorate; et altre tante di alabastro; di nero lustro; di porfidi; e di serpentine. Sopra di tale altezza poi sono ne'debiti luoghi ben disposte venticinque statue di pietra di mezzana grandezza, tra le quali con debite distanze s'ergono venti candelieri di pietra, che servono per illuminar alcune solennità principali del Christianesimo.

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On three parts, that is the one that surrounds the altar and the right and left is screened more than half with square pictures on the outside, although in the rest that is its inside part is encircled around by eight columns. . . And these leave small distances between one and the other that are screened by certain iron grates of many small pieces, joined together in such a way that they form a variety of very beautiful holes through which one can easily see inside.

From its main door, equally descending, up to the other two, the choir of the church of the Santo is screened off by various different types of stones and bronzes, however that twenty-four pilasters ten of which are white stone, and fourteen of red, well-arranged, and fixed above a continual white base, set in red, leaving twenty equal distances, eight of which are filled with red stone that in the highest parts have very shiny black settings surrounded by white marble ornament and twelve also filled with marble, displaying above many bronze pictures, very large, that represent some sacred stories of the Old Testament.

The height of this choir screen is eleven piedi, having in its space as many hollows as various settings, of winged angel heads of bronze, gilded; and many other pieces of alabaster; of black polish; porphyry; and serpentine. Above this height are in proper spaces, well arranged, twenty-five stone statues of medium height, between which in proper distances are erected twenty stone candelabra, that are to illuminate some important Christian ceremonies.

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# Choir Stalls in Venice and Northern Italy

## Furniture, Ritual and Space in the Renaissance Church Interior

### Volume 2. Illustrations

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of Warwick, History of Art

April 2010



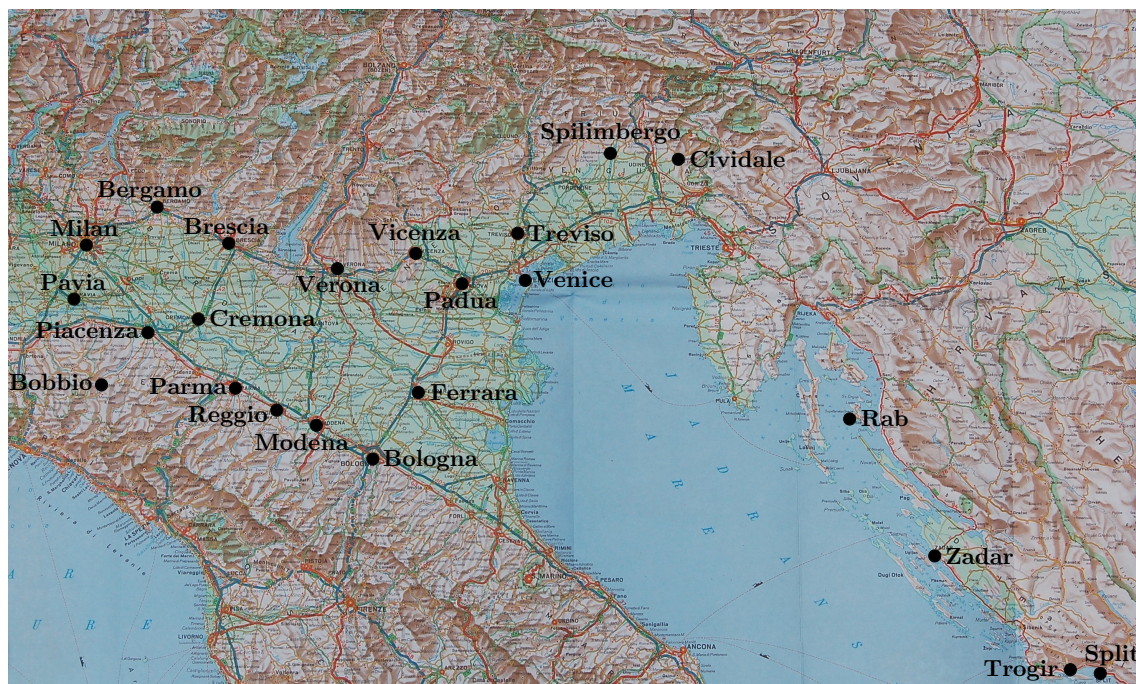


Figure 1: Map of Northern Italy and Dalmatia

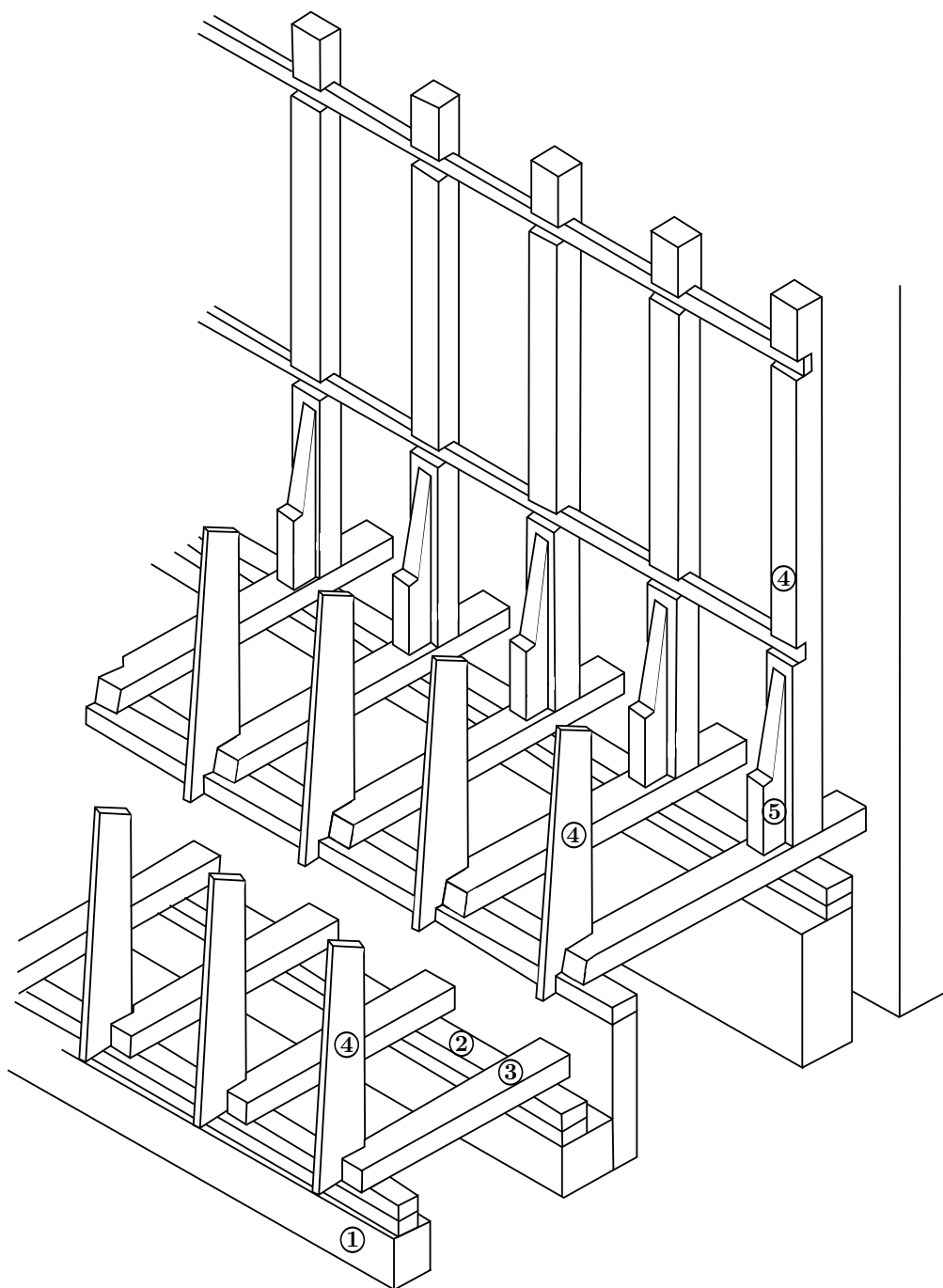


Figure 2: Diagram of underlying structure of Frari stalls, after Capovilla Pruneri, 'Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Disinfestazione antitarlo al coro ligneo (aprile-ottobre 2002)', 2002, fig. A, p. 2.

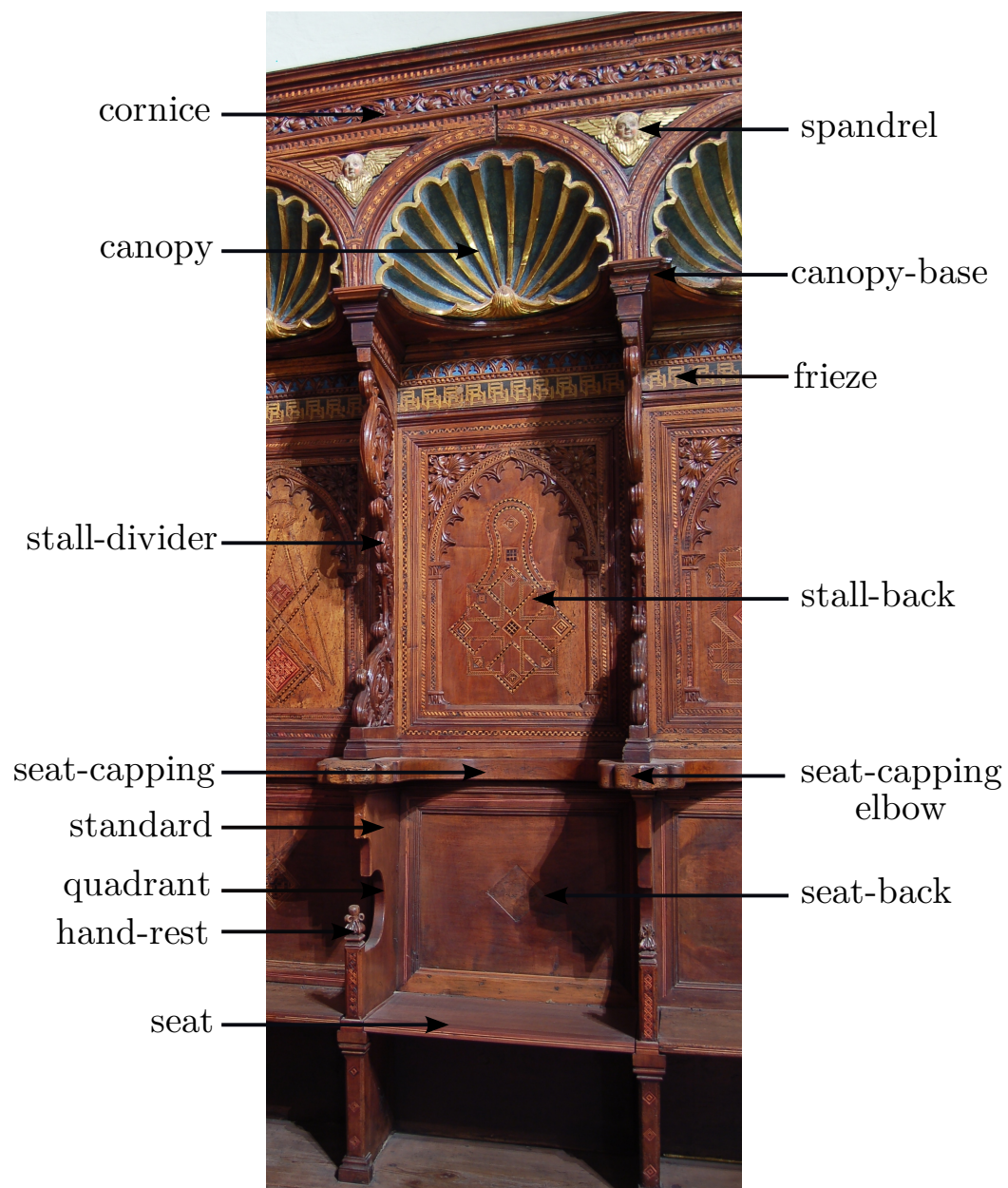


Figure 3: Choir-stall terminology

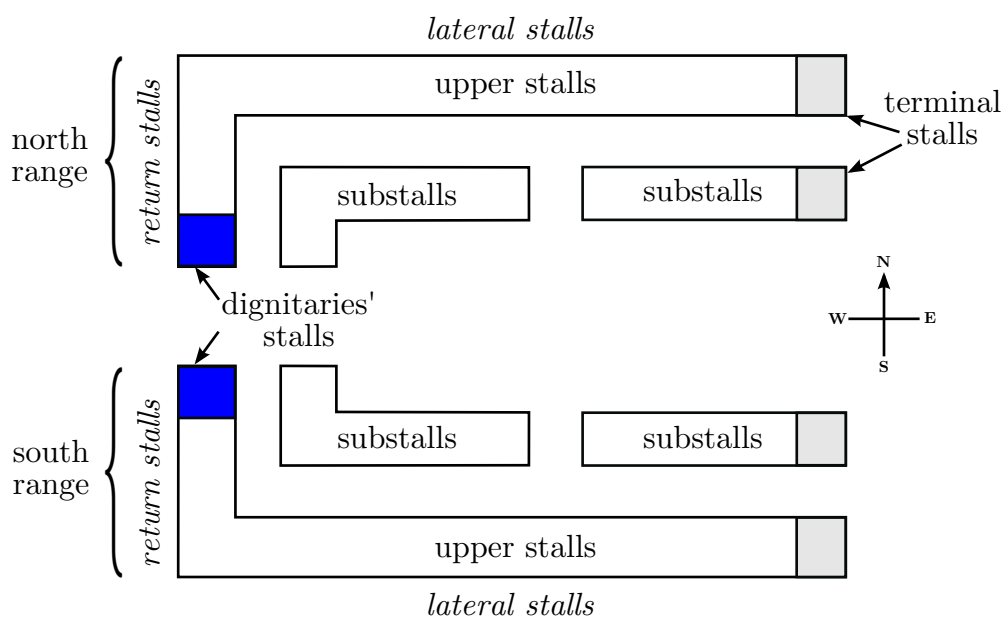


Figure 4: Terminology of rectilinear choir precincts

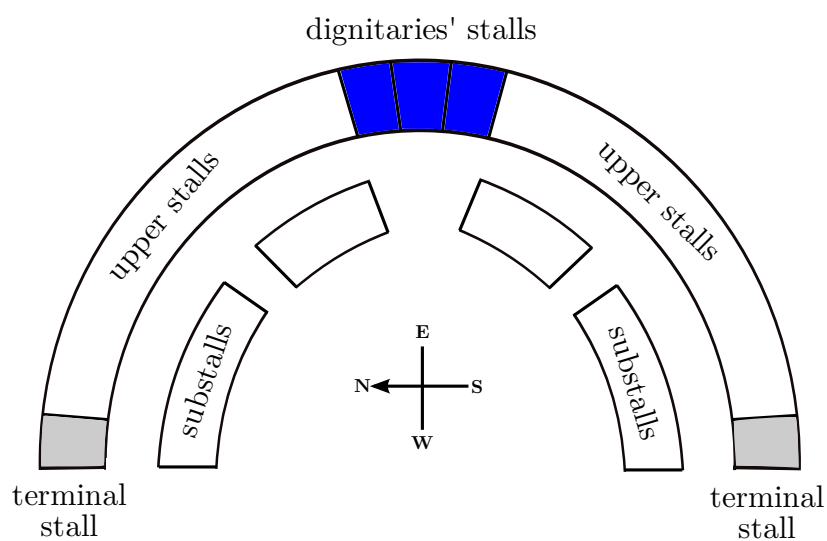


Figure 5: Terminology of semi-circular choir precincts





Figure 6: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, stall-end of terminal substall S1

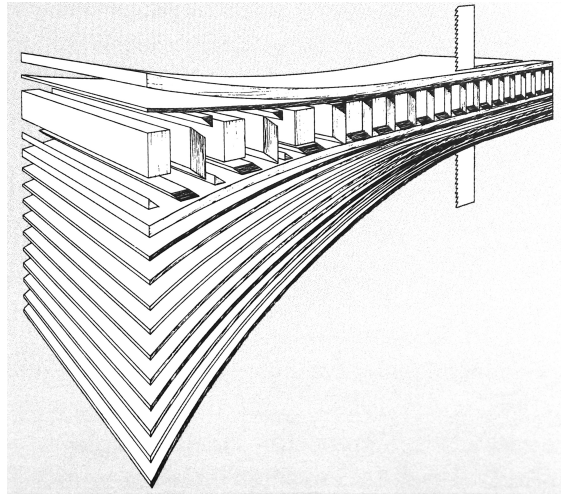


Figure 7: Construction of intarsia *a toppo*. Drawing by Daniel Kershaw in Antoine M. Wilmering, *The Gubbio Studiolo and its Conservation. Volume 2: Italian Renaissance intarsia and the conservation of the Gubbio studiolo* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1999), p. 64, fig. 2-3.



Figure 8: Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone, Spilimbergo, choir stalls (from Santa Maria), detail of substall N7.





Figure 9: Arena Chapel, Padua, choir stalls.



Figure 10: Basilica del Santo, Padua, stalls in Chapel of San Giacomo





Figure 11: San Fermo, Verona, choir stalls



Figure 12: San Fermo, Verona, choir stalls, detail of stall-back



Figure 13: Basilica of San Zeno, Verona, lectern, detail.





Figure 14: Sant'Anastasia, Verona, west door, detail



Figure 15: San Fermo, Verona, roof



Figure 16: Martino da Verona, *Doctors of the Church*, 1396. San Fermo, Verona, nave pulpit.





Figure 17: Verona Cathedral, choir stalls (now in adjacent church of Sant'Elena)





Figure 18: Verona Cathedral, choir stalls, detail



Figure 19: Split Cathedral, south choir benches, detail





Figure 20: St Francis, Zadar, stall five





Figure 21: San Domenico, Ferrara, choir stalls



Figure 22: San Domenico, Ferrara, choir stalls, side of stall N19



Figure 23: Basilica of San Petronio, Bologna, altar in Bolognini chapel





Figure 24: Tempietto Longobardo, Cividale del Friuli, choir stalls, detail of Abbess' stall





Figure 25: Tempietto Longobardo, Cividale del Friuli, choir stalls, detail of lateral stalls



(a) Tempietto Longobardo, Cividale del Friuli, detail of stall canopy



(b) San Fermo, Verona, detail of nave roof

Figure 26: Woodworking techniques in Cividale and Verona





Figure 27: Guariento, *Investiture of St Augustine*, 1368–70. Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua, *cappella maggiore*. From Sergio Bettini and Lionello Puppi, *La chiesa degli Eremitani di Padova* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1970), plate 47.



Figure 28: Giusto de' Menabuoi, *Birth of John the Baptist*, 1375–78. Baptistery, Padua.



Figure 29: Hildesheim Cathedral, choir stalls. From Rudolf Busch, *Deutsches Chorgestühl in sechs Jahrhunderten* (Hildesheim and Leipzig: August Lax, 1928), fig. 13.





Figure 30: San Vittore, Bologna, choir stalls





Figure 31: Santa Maria dei Servi, Bologna, choir stalls



Figure 32: Santa Maria dei Servi, Bologna, choir stalls, detail of stall canopy





Figure 33: Reggio Emilia Cathedral, choir stalls





Figure 34: Workshop of Cerchia di Agnolo and Bartolomeo degli Erri, *Pope Innocent IV names St Peter Martyr as Inquisitor* (detail from *St Peter Martyr altarpiece*) fifteenth century. Parma, Galleria Nazionale.



Figure 35: Basilica of San Zeno, Verona, choir stalls



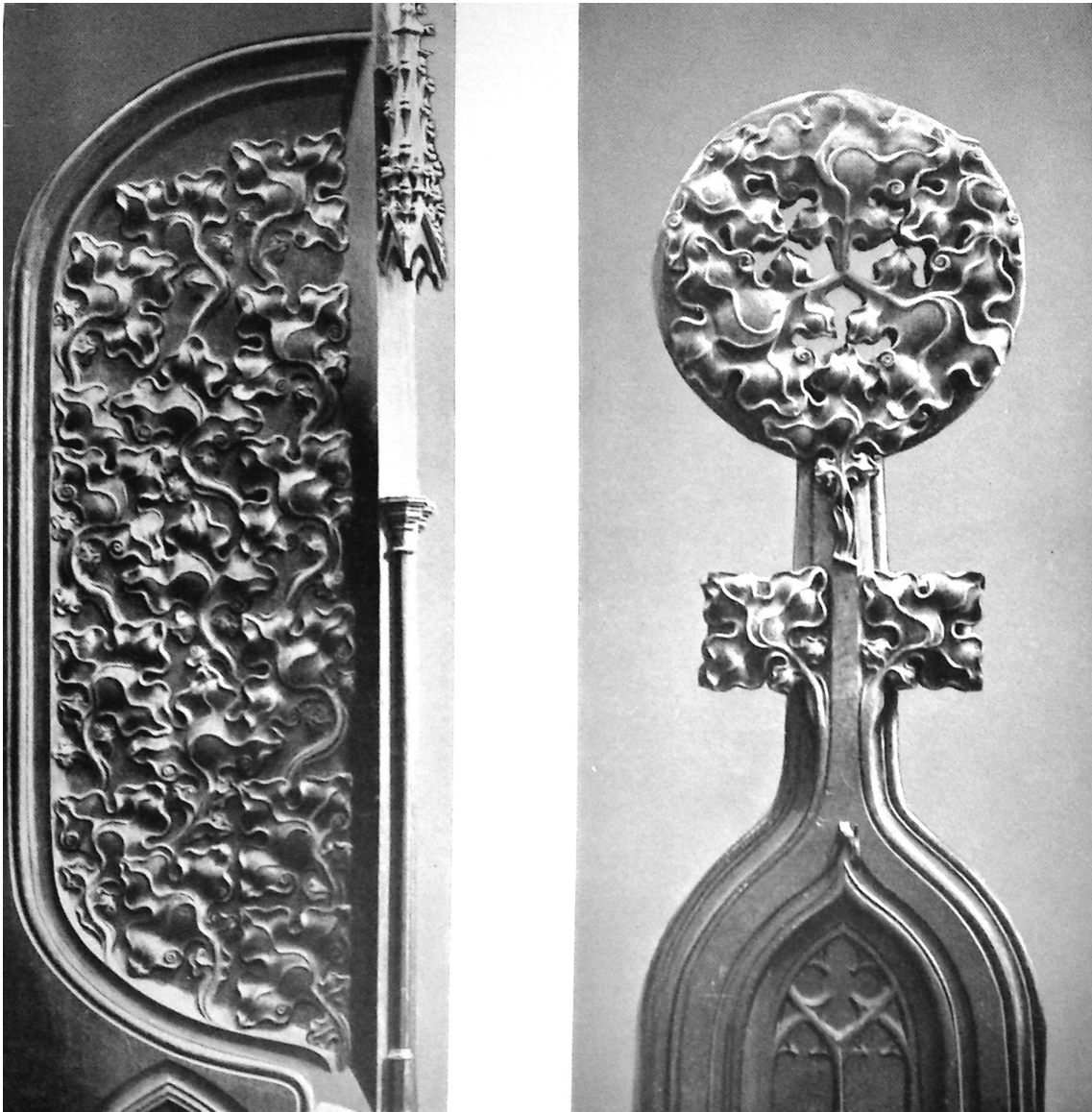


Figure 36: Halberstadt Cathedral, choir stalls. From Rudolf Busch, *Deutsches Chorgestühl in sechs Jahrhunderten* (Hildesheim and Leipzig: August Lax, 1928), fig. 32.

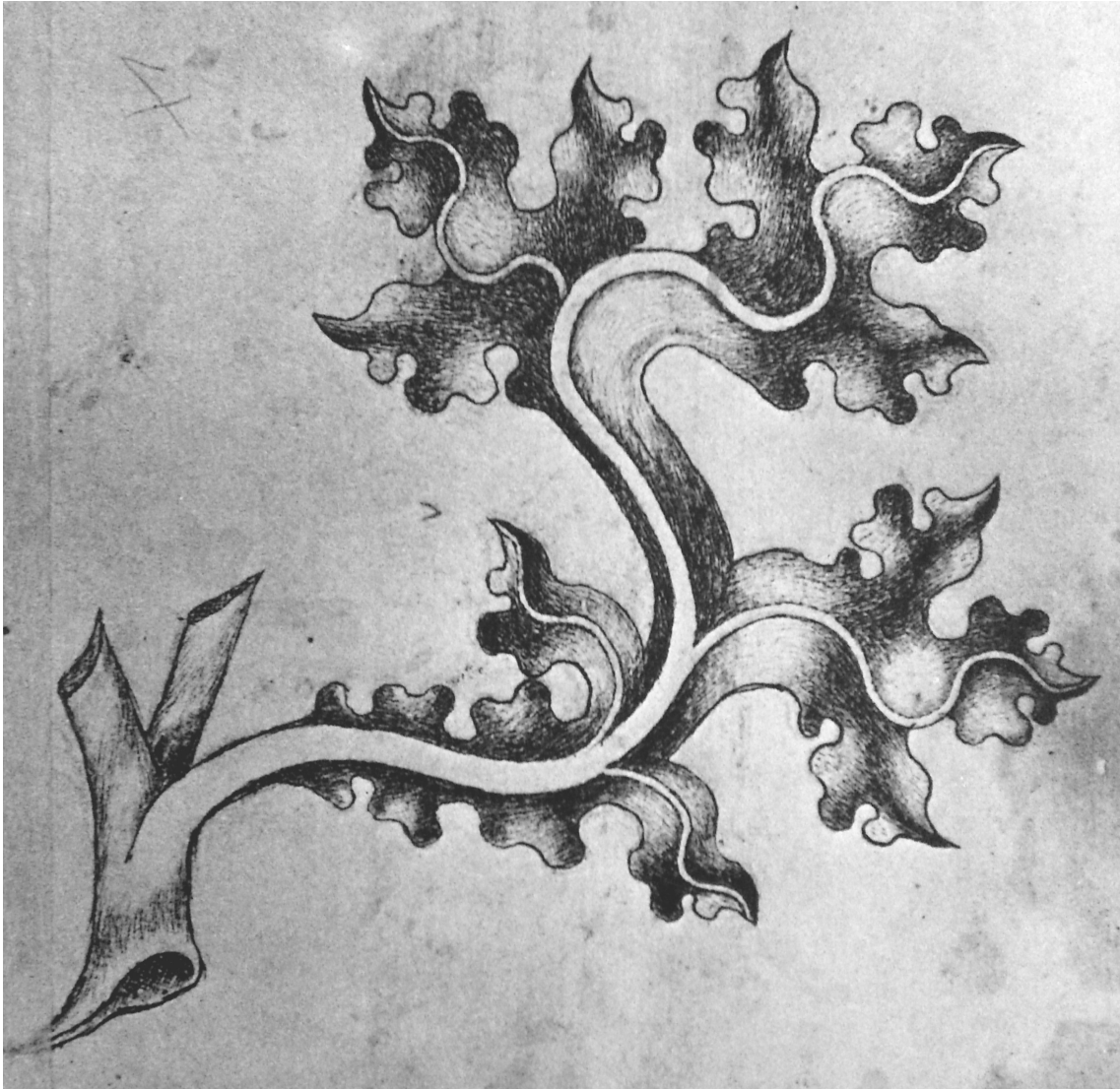


Figure 37: Hans Böblinger, *Pattern book designs*, 1435. From François Bucher, *Architector. The Lodge Books and Sketchbooks of Medieval Architects*, vol. 1 (New York: Abaris, 1979), p. 393 (HB11).





Figure 38: Piacenza Cathedral, choir stalls





(a)



(b)

Figure 39: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, choir stalls



Figure 40: San Francesco, Pavia, stall-back six





Figure 41: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, stall N1





Figure 42: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, detail of angel above north cornice



Figure 43: Corpus Domini, Bologna, choir stalls





Figure 44: Corpus Domini, Bologna, stall-back N1



Figure 45: San Lanfranco, Pavia, choir stalls, detail of stall S1





Figure 46: Laon Cathedral, chapel screen. From Laurence Fligny, *Le Mobilier en Picardie 1200–1700* (Paris: Picard, 1990), p. 50, fig. 23.





(a) Brescia, Duomo Nuovo. Detail of lectern



(b) Brescia, San Francesco. Detail of sacristy cupboard

Figure 47: Tracery panels in Brescia



Figure 48: Santo Stefano, Venice, choir stalls.



Figure 49: Abbess' throne, from convent of San Paolo in Parma. Galleria Nazionale, Parma. From Augusto Pedrini, *L'ambiente, il mobilio e le decorazioni del Rinascimento in Italia* (Turin: Itala Ars, 1925), p. 45, fig. 70.





Figure 50: *Coronation of the Virgin*, intarsia tympanum. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Orvieto. From Wilmering (1999), vol. 2, p. 83, fig. 2-35.





Figure 51: Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, *Creation of the World* intarsia scene on choir stalls. From Wilmering (1999), vol. 2, p. 88, fig. 2-40.





(a) South wall



(b) North wall

Figure 52: Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, *Sagrestia delle Messe*. From Margaret Haines, *The "Sacrestia delle Messe" of the Florentine Cathedral* (Florence: Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1983), plates VII and XIII.



(a) San Prospero, Reggio Emilia, stall 18



(b) San Petronio, Bologna, stall S2

Figure 53: Choir stalls in San Prospero, Reggio Emilia and San Petronio, Bologna





Figure 54: Modena Cathedral, choir stalls





Figure 55: Parma Cathedral, choir stalls





Figure 56: Santa Corona, Vicenza, choir stalls



Figure 57: Santa Giustina, Padua, fifteenth-century choir stalls (*Coro vecchio*)





(a) Stall S8



(b) Stall S4

Figure 58: Santa Giustina, Padua, fifteenth-century choir stalls (*Coro vecchio*)



Figure 59: Cremona Cathedral, detail of stall nine





Figure 60: Ferrara Cathedral, detail of stall forty-three



Figure 61: San Giorgio fuori le Mura, Ferrara, choir stalls





Figure 62: Certosa di Pavia, north range of choir stalls





Figure 63: Santa Trinità, Parma, choir stalls



Figure 64: Santa Maria in Organo, Verona, view of south choir stalls





Figure 65: San Giovanni Evangelista, Parma, view of south choir stalls



Figure 66: San Petronio, Bologna, stalls in Sacramento chapel (formerly in San Michele in Bosco)



Figure 67: Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, substall panel





Figure 68: San Nicola, Rodengo (near Brescia), choir stalls



Figure 69: San Francesco, Brescia, choir stalls





Figure 70: Madonna dei Carmini, Brescia, choir stalls





Figure 71: San Giuseppe, Brescia, detail of choir stalls (from church of San Rocco)



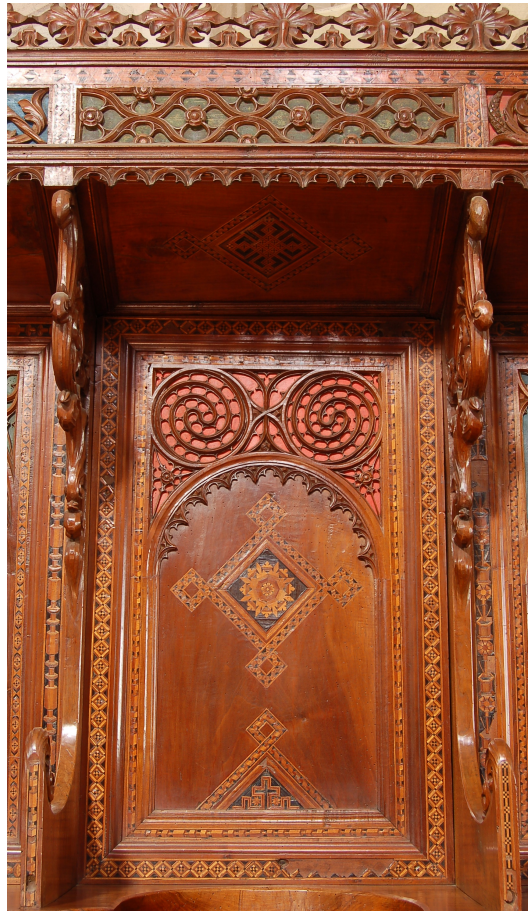


(a) San Colombano, Bobbio, stall N11



(b) Santi Nazaro e Celso, Verona, detail of sacristy cupboard

Figure 72: Intarsia panels in Bobbio and Verona



(a) San Colombano, Bobbio, stall N10



(b) Piacenza Cathedral, stall 11

Figure 73: Tracery panels in Bobbio and Piacenza





Figure 74: Sant'Anastasia, Verona, stall N20



Figure 75: Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, stall eight





Figure 76: Modena Cathedral, view of north substalls





Figure 77: Sant'Anastasia, Verona, view of south stalls

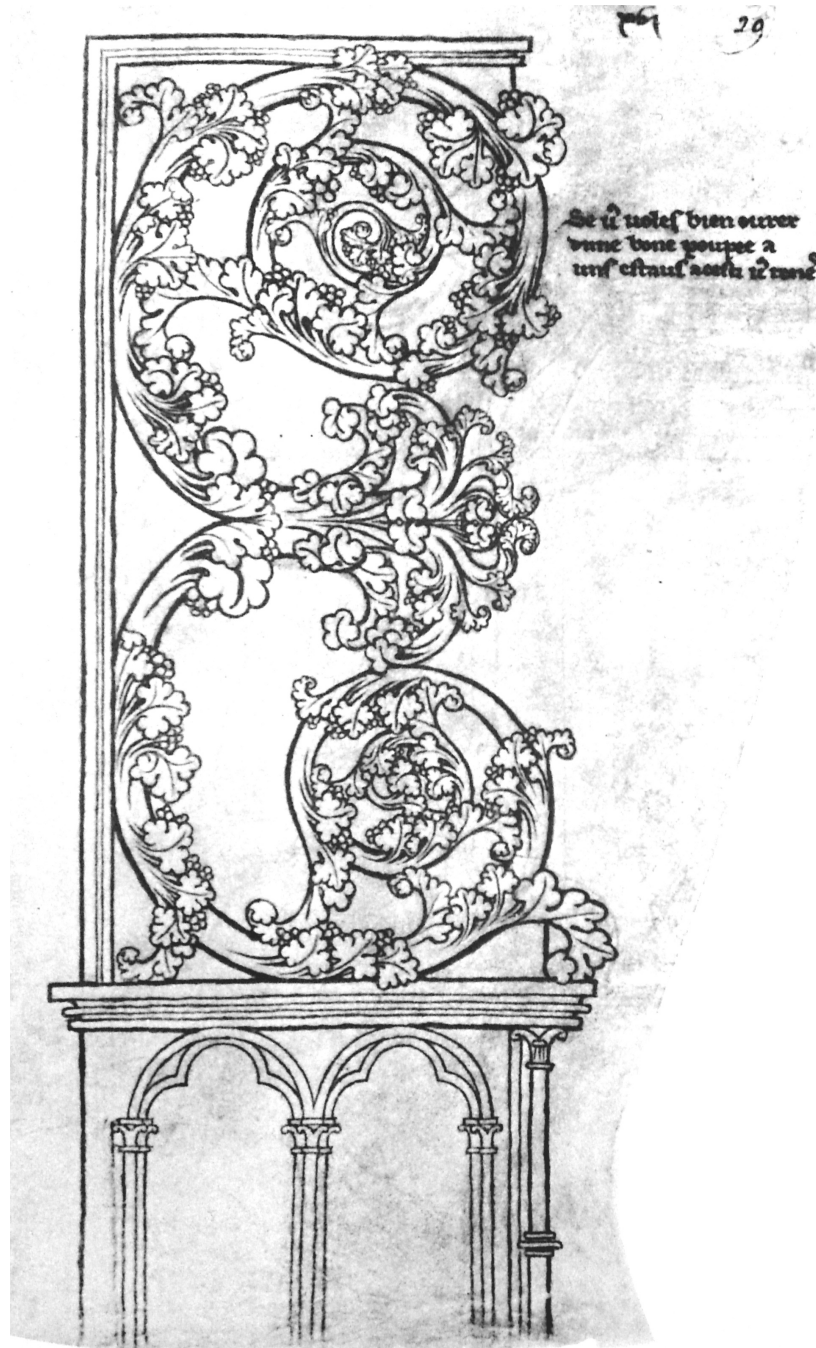


Figure 78: Villard de Honnecourt, *Design for a poppet*, thirteenth-century. From Bucher (1979), p. 159.





Figure 79: Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone, Spilimbergo (stalls from Santa Maria)





Figure 80: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, view of north substalls





(a) San Zeno, Verona, stall-end N1



(b) Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, stall-end N1

Figure 81: Stall-end carving in Verona and Milan



Figure 82: San Nicola, Rodengo, stall twelve





Figure 83: Santa Corona, Vicenza, stall-back fourteen



(a) Stall-back N24



(b) Stall-back S24

Figure 84: Santa Giustina, Padua, fifteenth-century choir stalls (*Coro vecchio*)





Figure 85: Parma Cathedral, stall-end of stall S1





Figure 86: Parma Cathedral, choir stalls



(a) Stall N13



(b) Stall S14

Figure 87: San Girolamo della Certosa, Bologna





Figure 88: San Michele in Isola, Venice, choir stalls





Figure 89: San Domenico, Bologna, stall fifty-five



Figure 90: Santa Maria Maggiore, Bergamo. View of choir benches showing protective covers





Figure 91: Santa Giustina, Padua, sixteenth-century choir stalls (*Coro nuovo*)





Figure 92: San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, view of south choir stalls



(a) Cathedral of Sainte Pierre, Geneva, detail of choir stalls



(b) Santa Corona, Vicenza, detail of choir stalls

Figure 93: Comparison of quadrant sections





Figure 94: Altenberg Cathedral, choir stalls. From Busch (1928), fig. 6.



Figure 95: San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna, stall-back four





Figure 96: Contract drawing for choir stalls of San Petronio, Bologna. Archivio storico della Fabbriceria, Basilica di San Petronio, Bologna.





Figure 97: Contract drawing for choir stalls of Parma Cathedral. Florence, Uffizi, Gabinetto disegni e stampe.

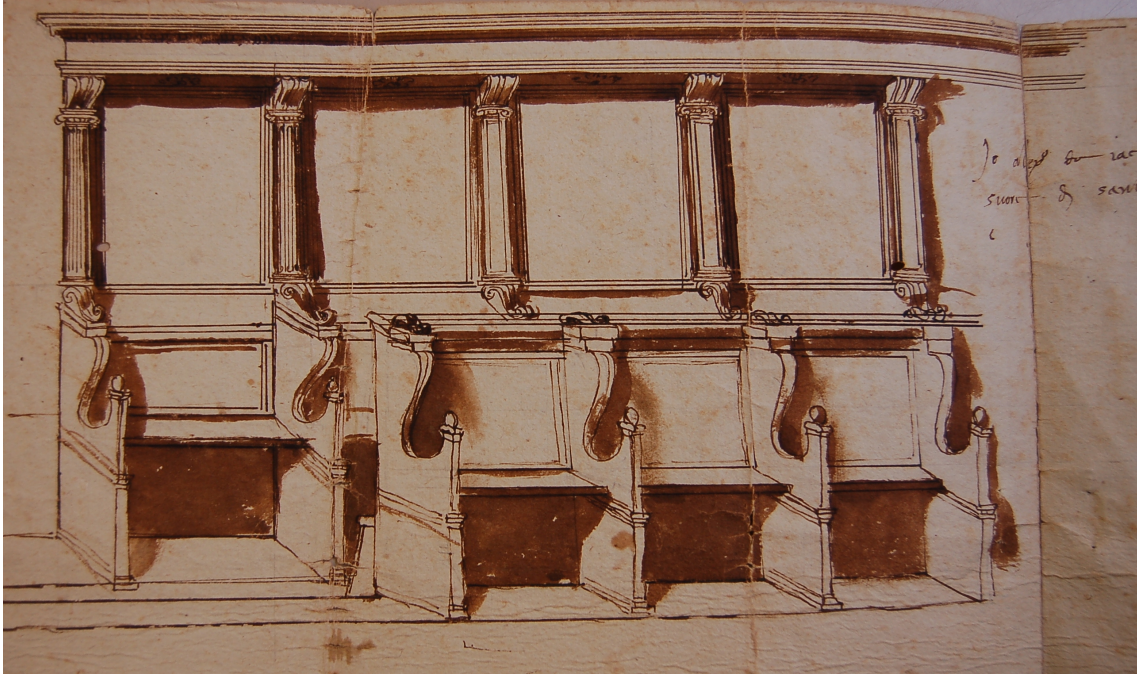


Figure 98: Contract drawing for choir stalls of Santa Margarita, Bologna. ASB, Demaniale, 52/3919

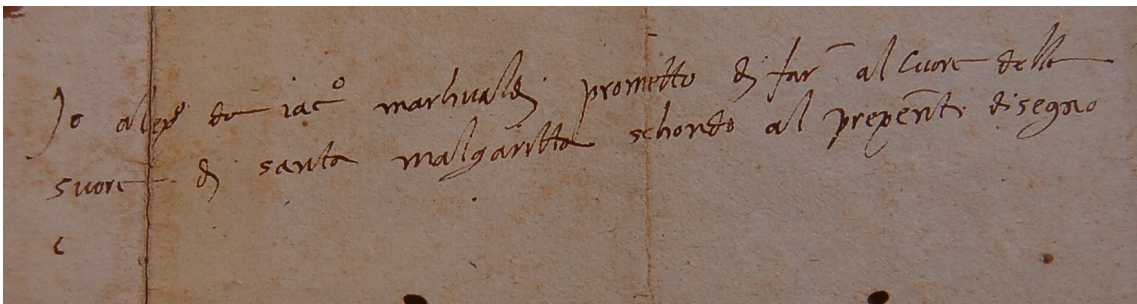


Figure 99: Contract drawing for choir stalls of Santa Margarita, Bologna. ASB, Demaniale, 52/3919





Figure 100: *Head of a man turned three-quarters to the right*, 210x188 mm. Broad pen and Indian ink. The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. Illustration from A. E. Popham and Johannes Wilde, *The Italian Drawings of the XV and XVI centuries in the collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle* (London: Phaidon Press, 1949), p. 179, cat. 34.

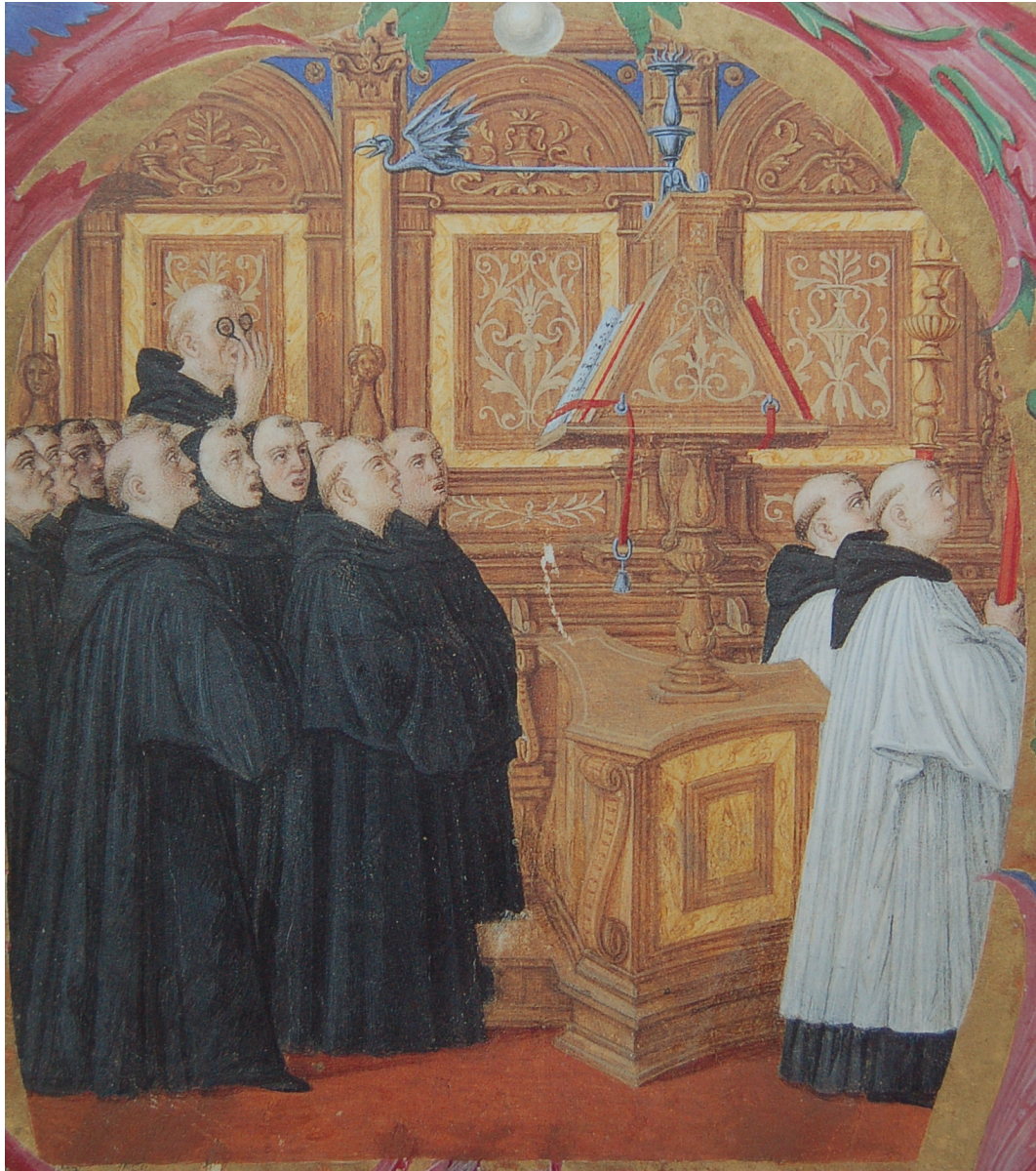


Figure 101: Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, M 45 (from collection of Paolo Tosio). Attributed to either Francesco (c. 1450 to before 1515) or Girolamo (1474/5- 1555) dai Libri. Illustration from Elena Lucchesi Ragni, Ida Gianfranceschi and Maurizio Mondini, *Il coro delle monache* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), p. 18, fig. 4.





Figure 102: San Vittore, Bologna, choir precinct



Figure 103: San Vittore, Bologna, choir doors





Figure 104: Certosa di Pavia, stall N1



(a) Stall back 20



(b) Stall back 24

Figure 105: Cremona Cathedral, choir stalls





(a) Stall-back N11



(b) Stall-back N13

Figure 106: Sant'Anastasia, Verona, choir stalls



(a) Substall N1



(b) Substall S1

Figure 107: Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan





Figure 108: San Sisto, Piacenza, detail of substall N2



Figure 109: Santa Giustina, Padua, stall N13



Figure 110: San Giovanni Evangelista, Parma, stall thirty-four





(a)



(b)

Figure 111: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, stall N25





Figure 112: Sant'Orso, Aosta, misericords, from Giovanni Romano, ed., *La Fede e I Mostri. Cori lignei scolpiti in Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta (secoli XIV–XVI)* (Turin: Fondazione Cassa di risparmio di Torino, 2002), p. 193, figg. 81a, 81b.



Figure 113: Santa Maria delle Passione, Milan, choir stalls





Figure 114: Certosa di Pavia, misericord



Figure 115: Certosa di Galluzzo, Florence, choir stalls. From Barbara Scantamburlo, *La tarsia rinascimentale fiorentina. L'opera di Giovanni di Michele da San Pietro a Monticelli* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 2003), p. 110, fig. 61.

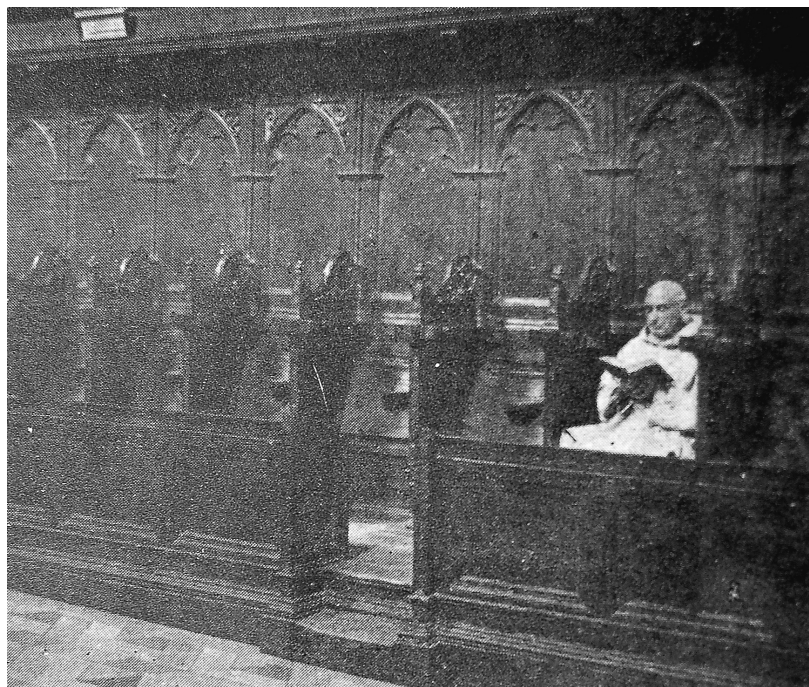


Figure 116: Certosa di Calci, choir stalls. From Aristo Manghi, *La Certosa di Pisa* (Pisa: Mariotti, 1911), figure opposite p. 52.





Figure 117: Certosa di Bologna, choir stalls in chapel of San Giuseppe





Figure 118: Certosa di Padula, choir stalls of the *Conversi* choir. Image from Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, Neg. no. A69/562.



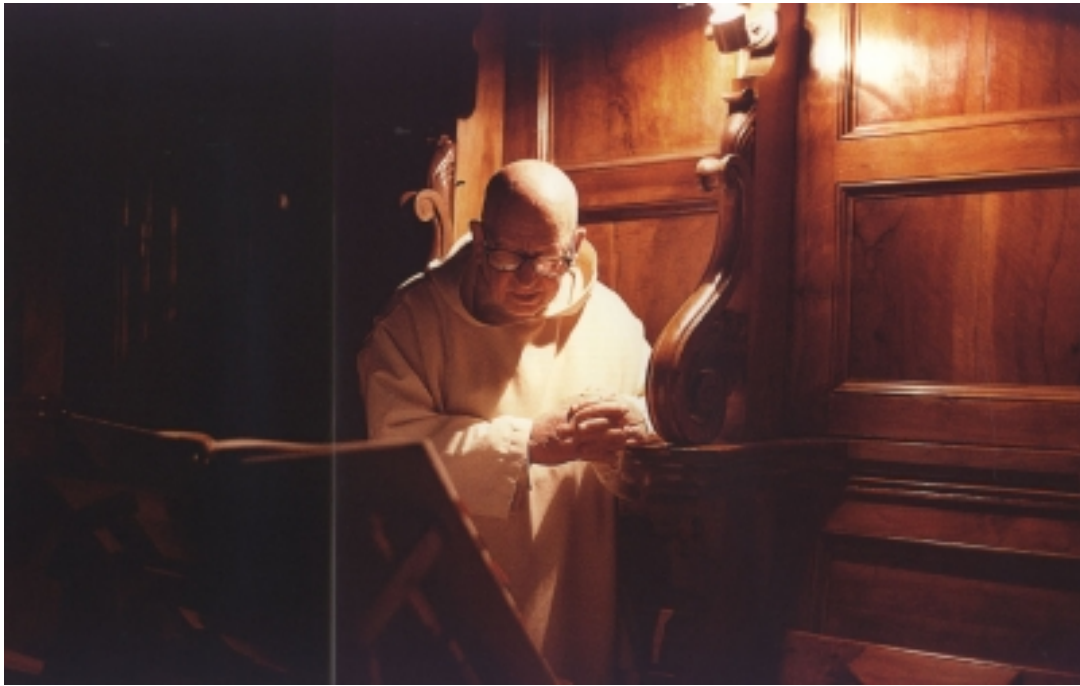


Figure 119: Certosa di Serra San Bruno, choir stalls. From <http://www.certosini.info/immaginicertosine/displayimage.php?album=72&pos=12> (accessed 5 November 2008).

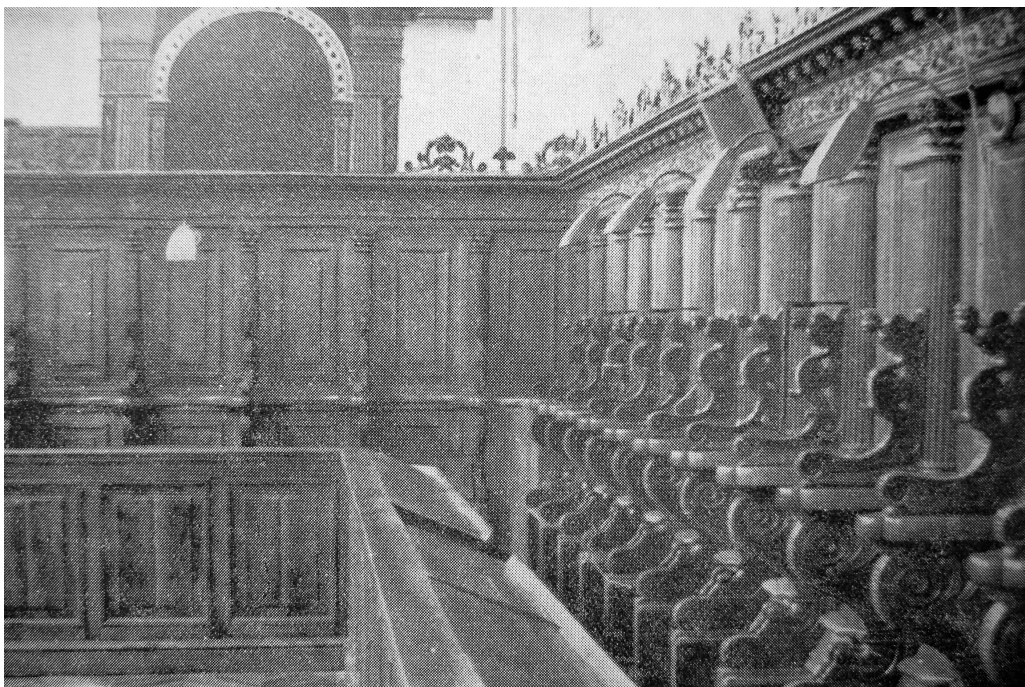


Figure 120: Certosa di Vedana, choir stalls. From Antonio Pellin, *La Certosa di Vedana nei dintorni di Belluno* (Rome: Bodoni, 1951), p. 49.





Figure 121: Franciscan church, Fribourg, Switzerland, choir stalls. Photograph by Donal Cooper.



Figure 122: Palermo Cathedral, choir stalls. Photograph from Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art





Figure 123: Tempietto Longobardo, Cividale, lecterns on north side



Figure 124: Antiphonary F from the Badia di Torrechiara. Illustration from Angelo Ciavarella, *Rassegna di corali miniati e libri liturgici. Manifestazioni del V centenario della Badia di Torrechiara* (Parma: Tipografia Benedettina, 1972), p. 24, fig. 8.





Figure 125: Trogir Cathedral, south lectern





Figure 126: Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo, MS 11D, fol. 158v (from the cathedral of Santa Maria de Dom). Antiphonary, dated to 1469. Illustration from Lucchesi Ragni et al (2003), p. 16, fig. 2.





Figure 127: San Petronio, Bologna, view of presbytery showing fifteenth-century organ



Figure 128: Modena Cathedral, intarsia panel of St John the Evangelist





Figure 129: Spilimbergo, SS. Giuseppe e Pantaleone. Lectern desk



Figure 130: Santa Maria in Organo, Verona. Lectern desk, west side



Figure 131: Santa Maria in Organo, Verona. Lectern desk, east side





Figure 132: San Vittore, Bologna, interior of church with choir screen

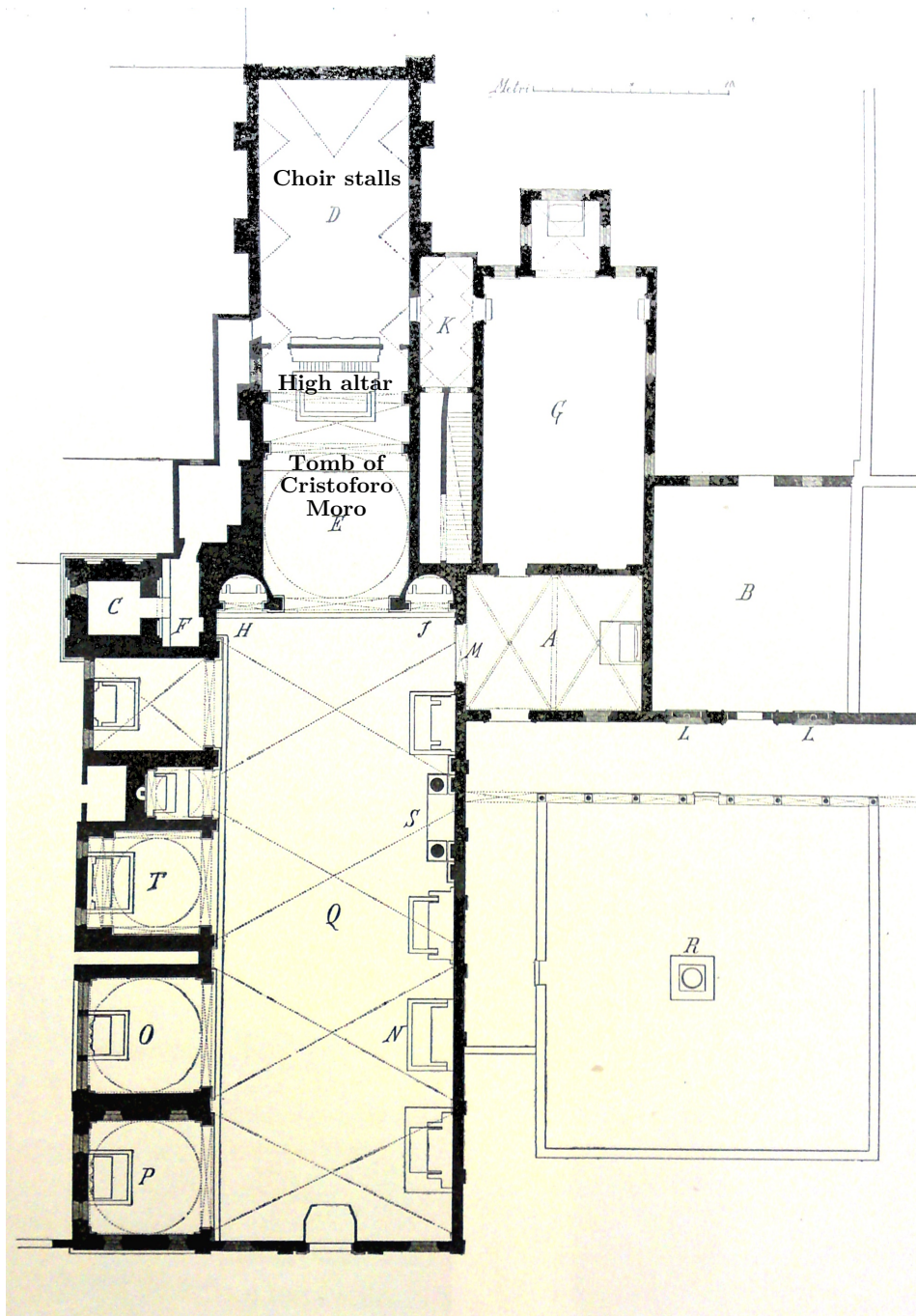


Figure 133: San Giobbe, Venice, plan from Pietro Paoletti, *L'architettura e la scultura del rinascimento in Venezia* (Venice: Ongania-Naya Editori, 1893–1897), p. 191.





Figure 134: San Giobbe, Venice, detail of choir stalls



Figure 135: San Pietro Martire, Murano, sacristy benches



Figure 136: San Giobbe, Venice, view of retrochoir from south-east





Figure 137: Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Venice, exterior of Cappella dell'Addolorata

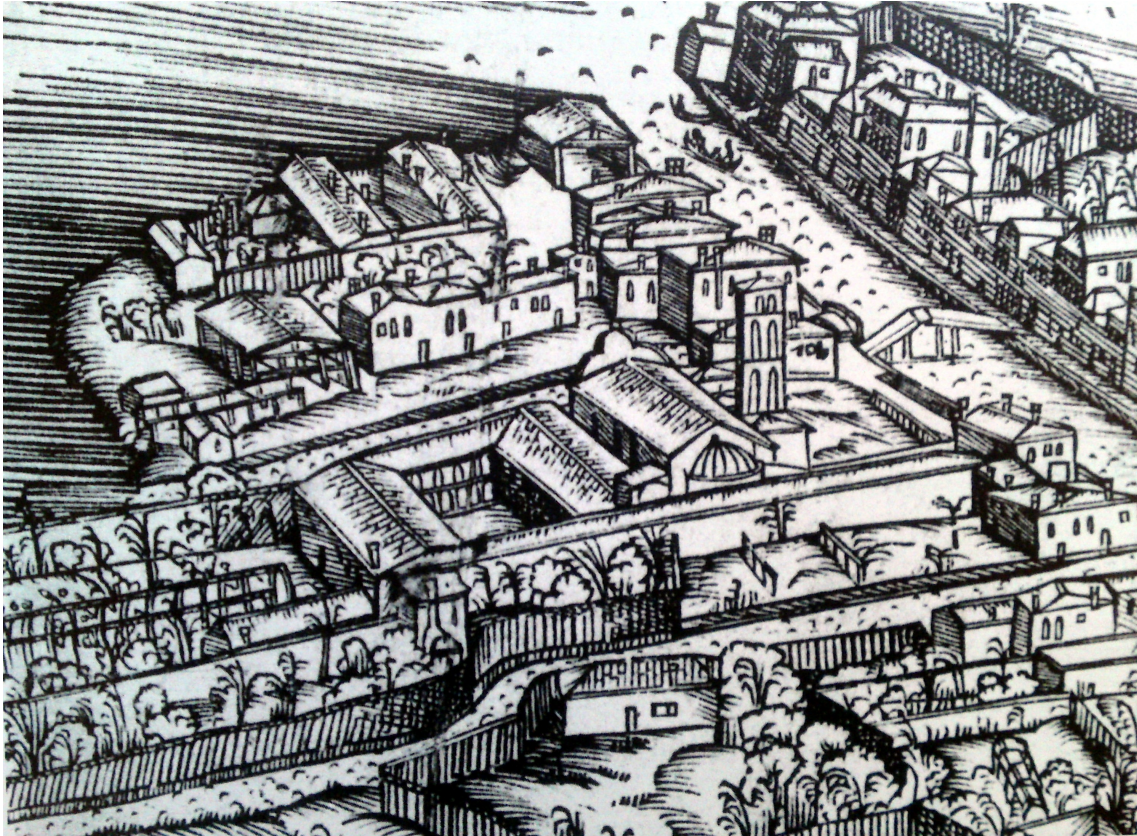


Figure 138: Jacopo de' Barbari, *Veduta prospettica di Venezia*, 1500. Venice, Museo Correr. Illustration from Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, 'San Giobbe. Architettura e decorazione', in *Tullio Lombardo. Scultore e architetto nella Venezia del Rinascimento. Atti del convegno di studi, Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, 4-6 Aprile 2006*, ed. by Matteo Ceriana (Verona: Cierre, 2007), fig. 2, p. 187.





Figure 139: San Giovanni, Brescia, interior facing high altar





Figure 140: San Francesco, Brescia, choir stalls inscription



Figure 141: San Francesco, Brescia, Cloister della Madonnina

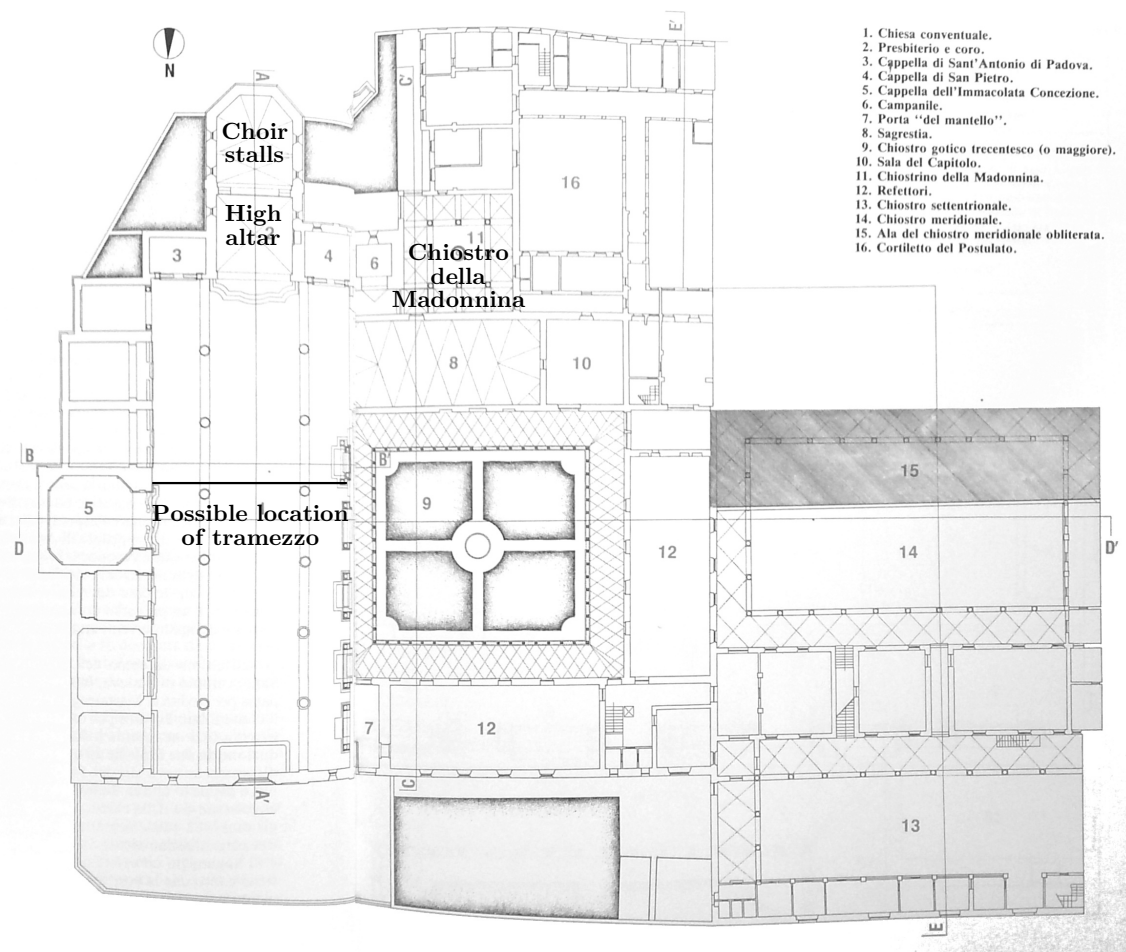


Figure 142: San Francesco, Brescia, plan of the convent from Volta et al. (1994), pp. 52–53.





Figure 143: San Francesco, Brescia, door leading to retrochoir, on south side





Figure 144: San Francesco, Brescia, Chapel of the Immaculate Conception

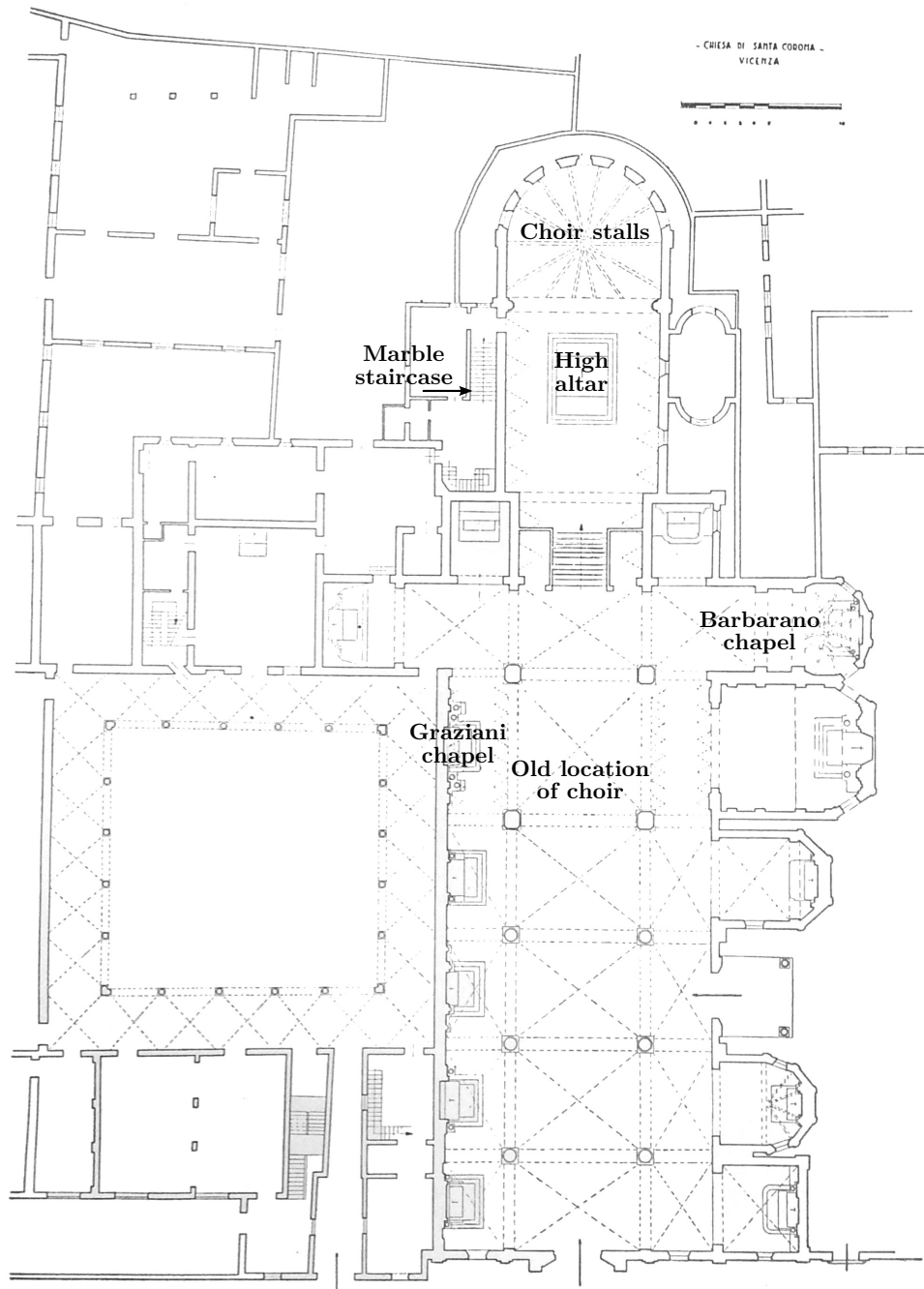


Figure 145: Santa Corona, Vicenza, plan. From Edoardo Arslan, *Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia. Vicenza. I. Le Chiese* (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1956), p. 51.





Figure 146: Santa Corona, Vicenza, view of nave facing east



(a) Monte Berico sacristy cupboard



(b) Santa Corona stall 8

Figure 147: Intarsia panels in Monte Berico sacristy and Santa Corona, Vicenza





(a) Stall 13



(b) Stall 19

Figure 148: Santa Corona, Vicenza, choir stall panels showing Sesso arms



(a) North side



(b) South side

Figure 149: Santa Corona, Vicenza, intarsia panels on sides of nave altar





Figure 150: Santa Corona, Vicenza, Graziani chapel



(a) Fifth nave pier on north



(b) Fourth nave pier on north

Figure 151: Santa Corona, Vicenza, inscriptions on fourth and fifth nave piers





Figure 152: Santa Corona, Vicenza, staircase from cappella maggiore

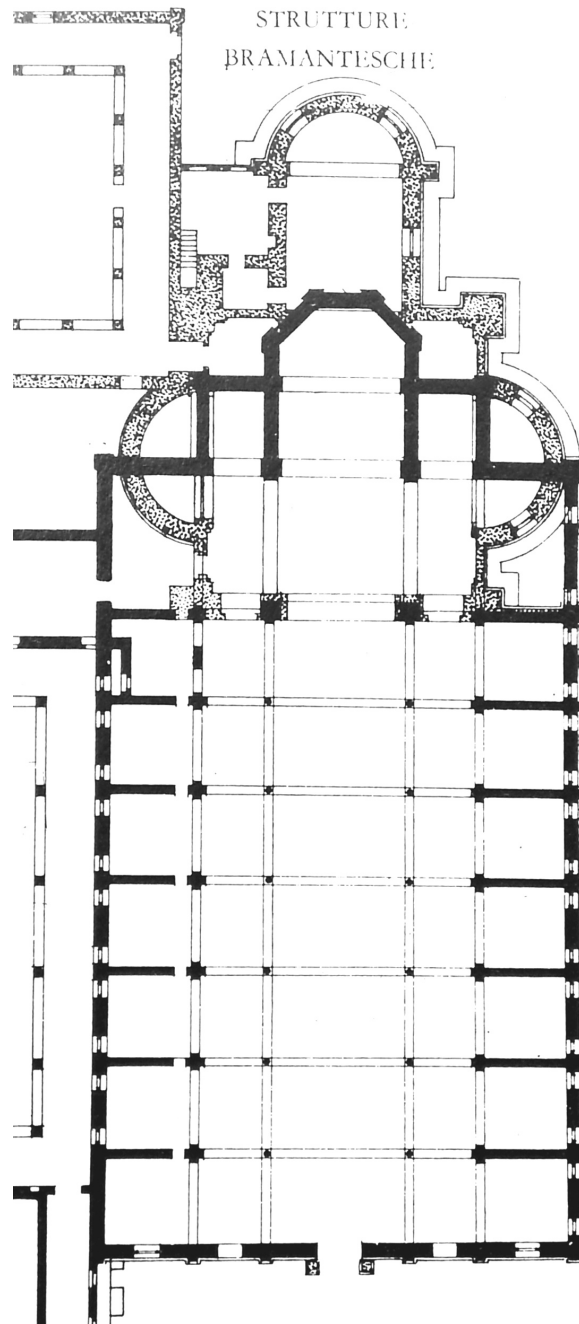


Figure 153: Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, plan from Pietro C. Marani, Roberto Cecchi and Germano Mulazzani, *Il Cenacolo e Santa Maria delle Grazie* (Milan: Electa, 1986), p. 34.

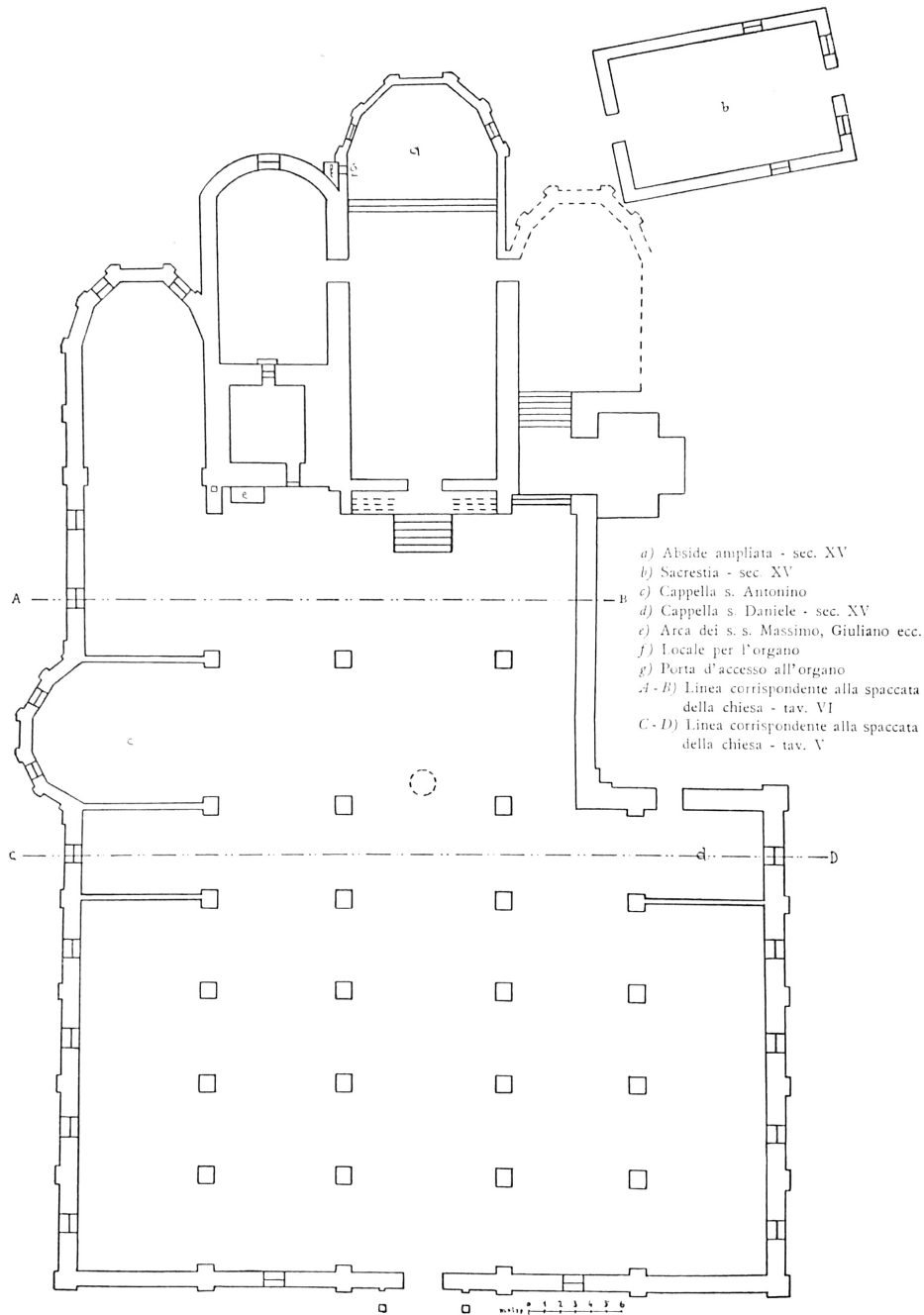


Figure 154: Santa Giustina, Padua, plan of the fifteenth-century church from Maria Tonzig, 'La basilica romanico-gotica di Santa Giustina in Padova', *Bollettino del Museo Civico di Padova*, New Series V XXII, no. VII (1929), plate XIX.



(a) Apse facing east



(b) Choir facing west

Figure 155: Santa Giustina, Padua, fifteenth-century apse and choir





Figure 156: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. 107. Benedetto Bordon, *Evangelario*, 1523. Illustration from Giovanni Lorenzoni and Giovanna Valenzano, *Il duomo di Modena e la basilica di San Zeno* (Verona: Banca popolare di Verona- Banco S. Geminiano e S. Prospero, 2000), p. 261, fig. 252.

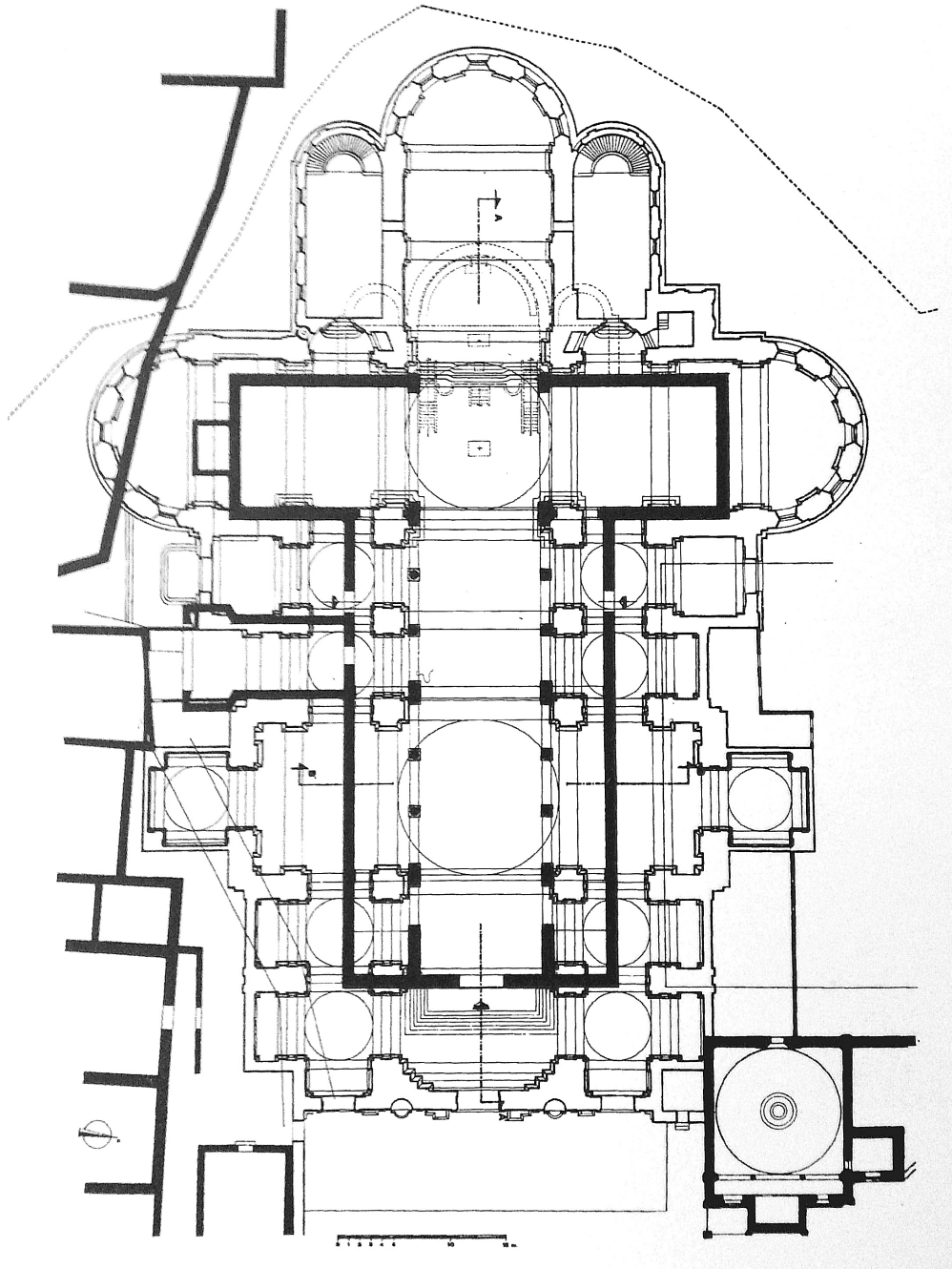


Figure 157: Padua Cathedral, plan from *Il nuovo presbiterio della cattedrale di Padova* (Milan: Skira, 1997), p. 17.





Figure 158: Medal showing Tribuna of St Peters, from Hannes Roser, *St. Peter in Rom im 15. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Hirmer, 2005), p. 112, fig. 78.





Figure 159: Padua Cathedral, view of choir facing east.

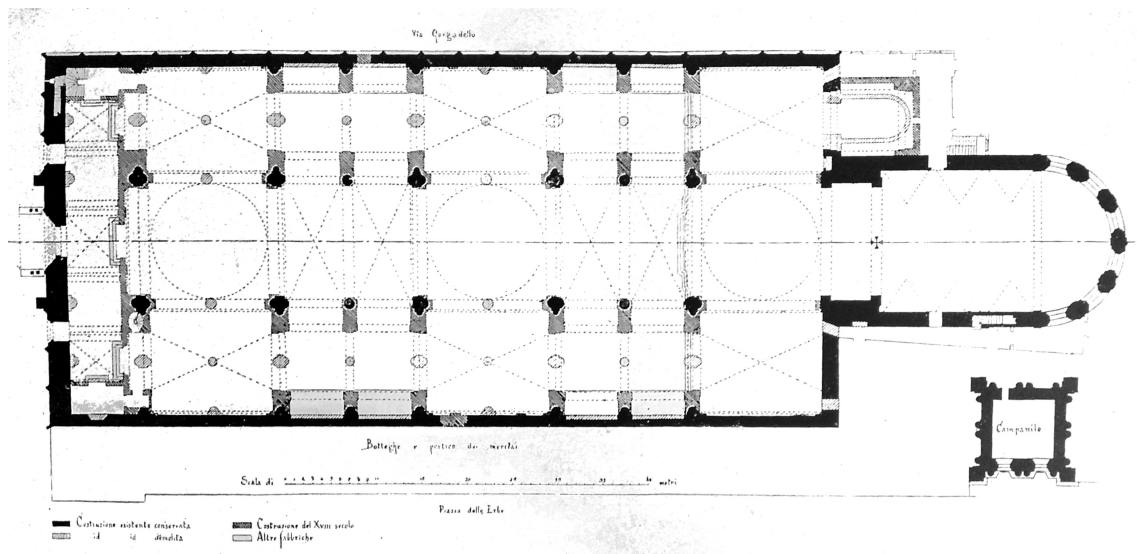


Figure 160: Ferrara Cathedral, plan from *La Cattedrale di Ferrara* (Verona: A. Mondadori, 1937), plate 78.



Figure 161: Ferrara Cathedral, view of choir





Figure 162: Reggion Emilia Cathedral, view of choir



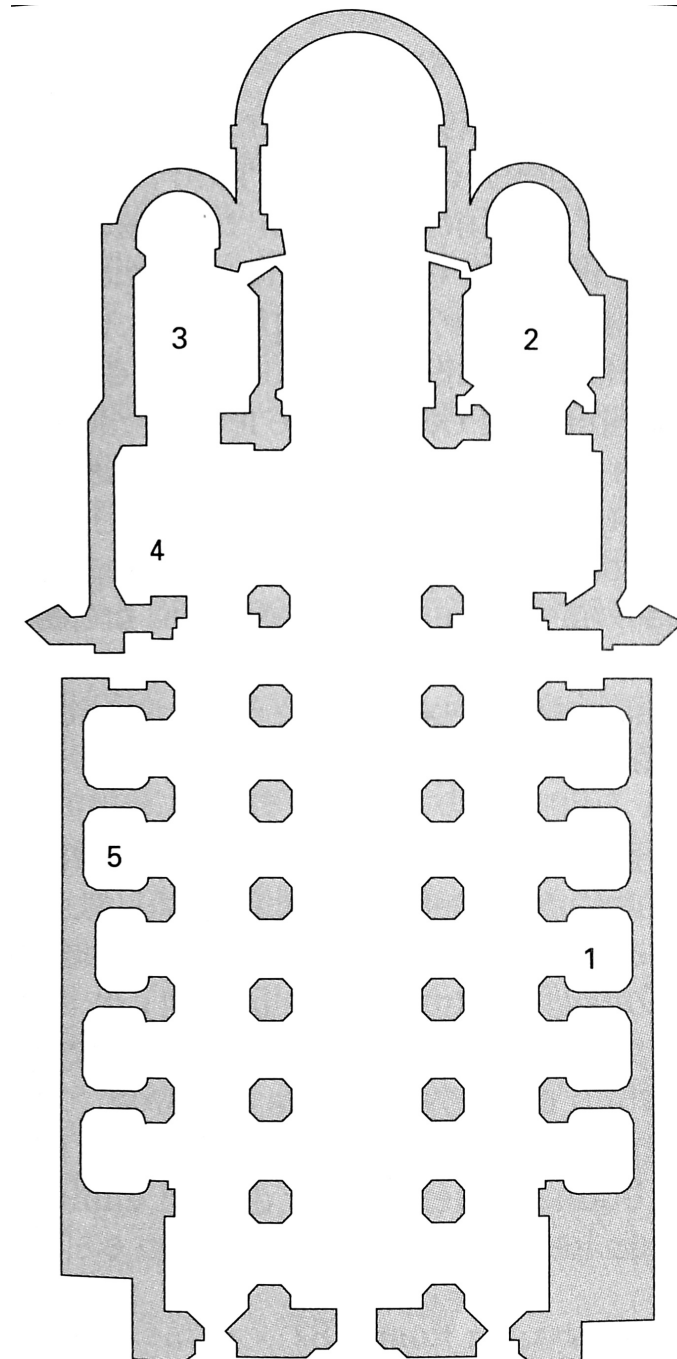


Figure 163: Reggio Emilia Cathedral, plan, from *Emilia-Romagna* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1996), p. 69.

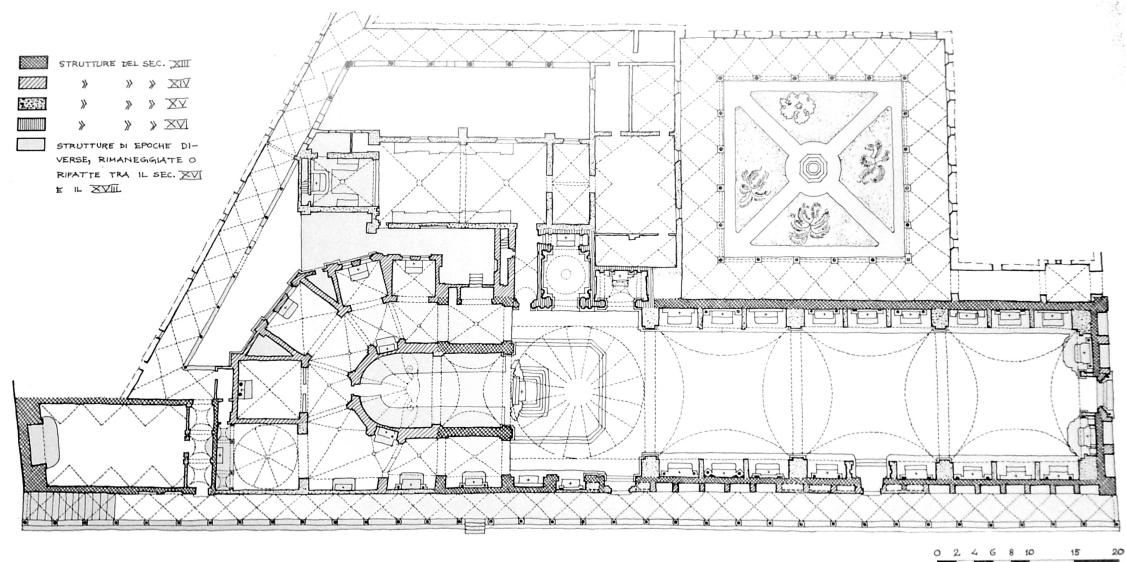


Figure 164: San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna, plan from Germana Piconi Aprato, 'L'architettura della chiesa di S. Giacomo', in *Il tempio di San Giacomo Maggiore in Bologna*, ed. by Carlo Volpe (Bologna: Resto di Carlino, 1967), plate 3.



Figure 165: San Prospero, Reggio Emilia, view of choir

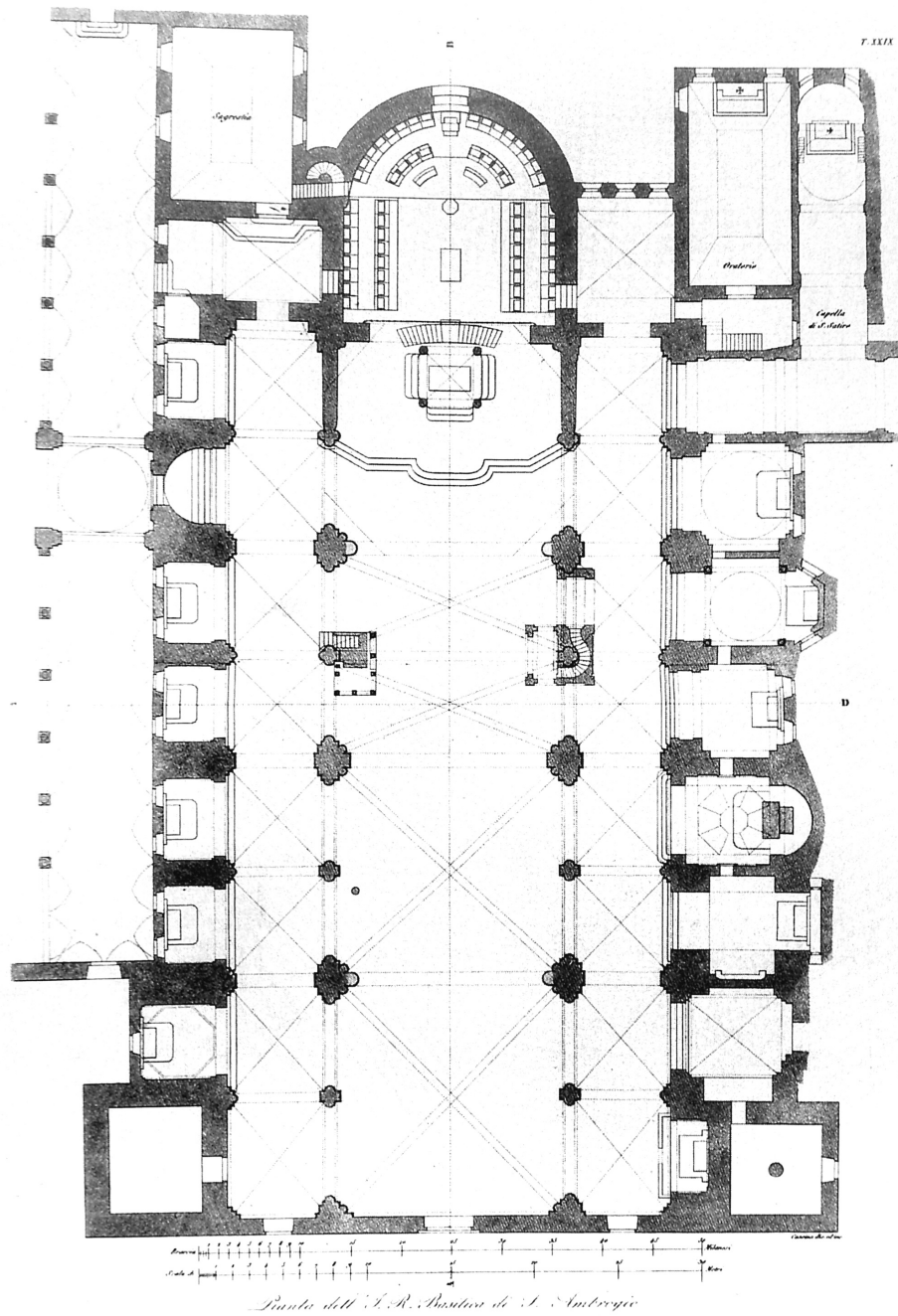


Figure 166: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan. Plan by F. Cassina (1840) from Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, ed., *La basilica di S. Ambrogio: Il tempio ininterrotto* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1995), vol. 1, p. 41, fig. 62.





Figure 167: Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, view of choir





(a) Relief on cathedra canopy



(b) Tympanum relief over central portal

Figure 168: Images of St George in Ferrara Cathedral





(a) Ferrara Cathedral, stall-back 32



(b) Staircase of Palazzo Estense

Figure 169: Este staircase, Ferrara



Figure 170: Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, central stall-back



(a) St Dominic, stall-back 20



(b) St Peter Martyr, stall-back 22

Figure 171: Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, stall-backs





Figure 172: San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna, seat-back nineteen (central stall)



Figure 173: San Zaccaria, Venice, façade





Figure 174: San Zaccaria, Venice, view of high altar



Figure 175: Andrea del Castagno and Francesco da Faenza, *God the Father, the four evangelists and saints John the Baptist and Zachariah*, 1442. San Zaccaria, Venice, present Cappella d'Oro





Figure 176: Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Ludovico da Forlì, *San Zaccaria high altarpiece*, 1443. San Zaccaria, Venice.





Figure 177: Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Ludovico da Forlì, *Santa Sabina altarpiece*, 1443. San Zaccaria, Venice.



Figure 178: Antonio Vivarini, Giovanni d'Alemagna and Ludovico da Forlì, *Corpus Christi* altarpiece, 1443. San Zaccaria, Venice.





Figure 179: Paolo Veneziano, *Crucifix with figures of Mary and John*, 1348. Church of St Dominic, Dubrovnik. Image from <http://www.aiwaz.net/panopticon/crucifix/gi4674c512>, accessed 7th April 2009.



(a) Zacharias



(b) Benedict

Figure 180: San Zaccaria. Venice, statues in present Cappella d'Oro

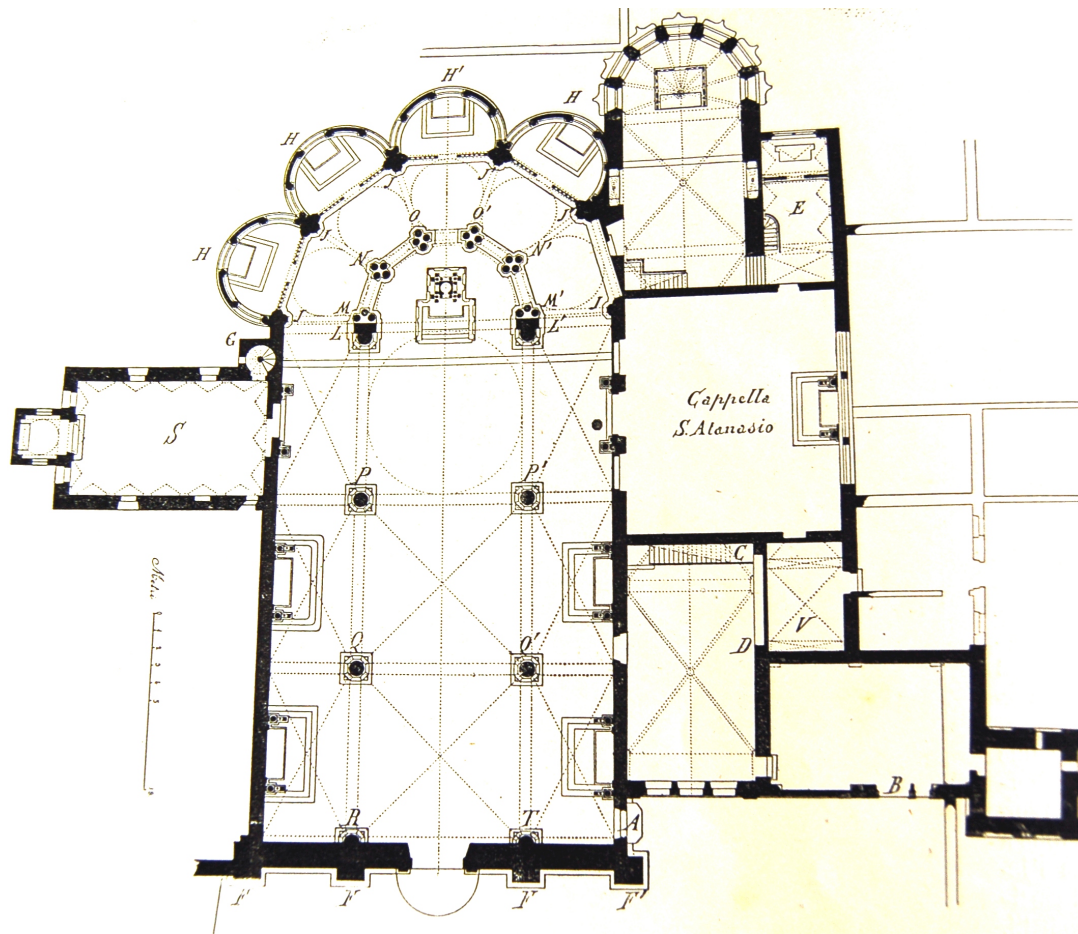


Figure 181: San Zaccaria, Venice, plan of present church, from Pietro Paoletti, *L'architettura e la scultura del rinascimento in Venezia* (Venice: Ongania-Naya Editori, 1893–1897), p. 62.





Figure 182: Basilica di San Marco, Venice, choir screen



Figure 183: San Zaccaria, Venice, choir stalls





Figure 184: San Zaccaria, Venice, detail of choir stalls



Figure 185: Sant'Elena, Venice, Chapel of Sant'Elena





Figure 186: Michele di Matteo, *Sant'Elena altarpiece*, after 1427. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.





Figure 187: San Zaccaria, Venice, stall-back E1

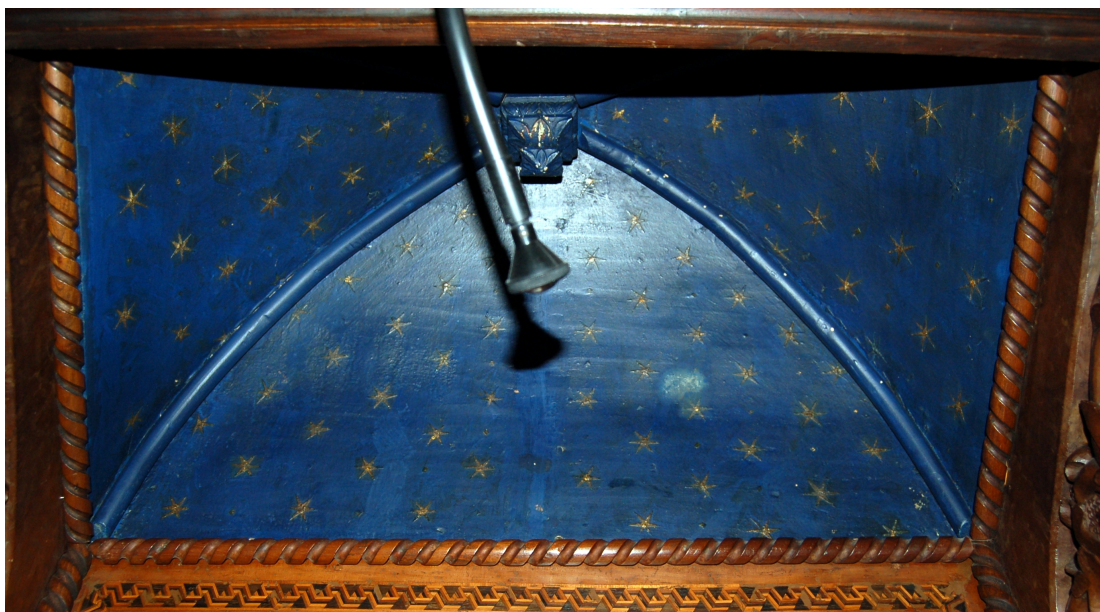




Figure 188: San Zaccaria, Venice, stall E1



(a) Stall-back 11



(b) Canopy of stall 11

Figure 189: San Francesco, Brescia, choir stalls.





(a) Stall-back W13



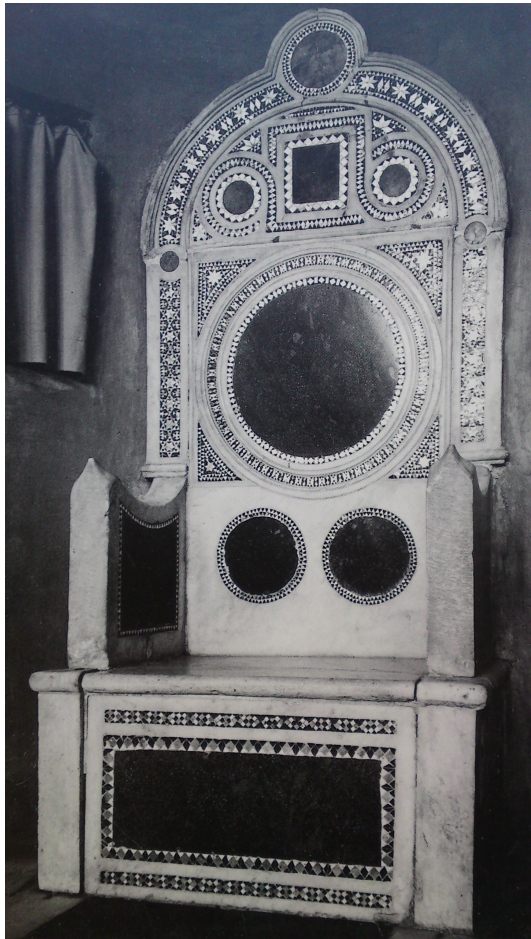
(b) Stall-back E10

Figure 190: San Zaccaria, Venice, choir stall details



Figure 191: Sant'Antonio in Polesine, Ferrara, detail of font.





(a) 'Cosmati' throne, Santa Balbina, Rome. Image from John Morley, *Furniture. The Western Tradition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), p. 64, fig. 107. (b) 'Throne of St Peter', San Pietro in Castello, Venice. Image from *Venezia e l'Islam 828-1797* (exhibition catalogue, Venice, Palazzo Ducale 28 July-25 November 2007), ed. Stefano Carboni (Venice: Marsilio, 2007) (hereafter referred to as *Venezia e l'Islam 828-1797* [2007]), p. 340, cat. 69.

Figure 192: Geometric decoration in stone furniture



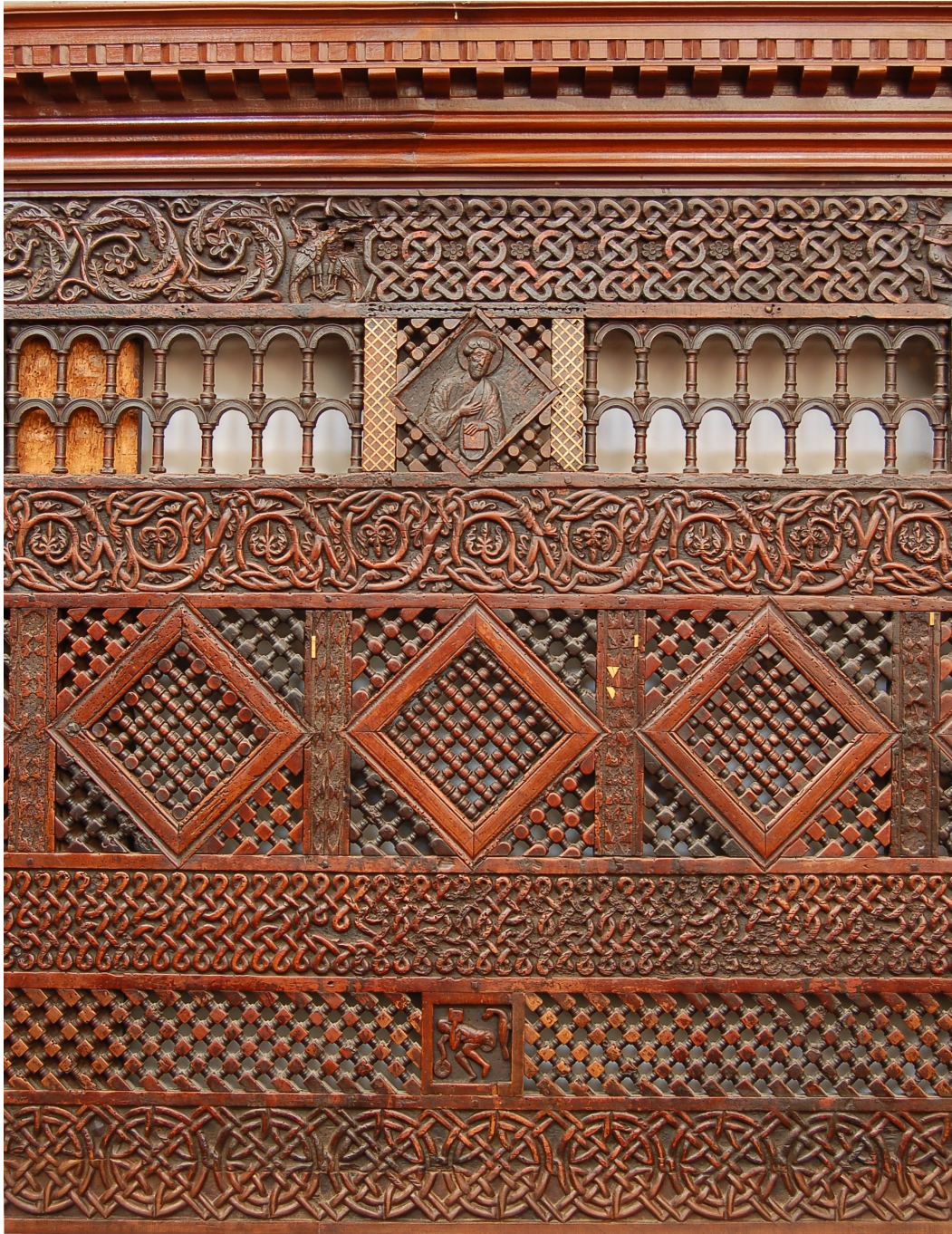


Figure 193: Split Cathedral, detail of south choir bench





Figure 194: *Almanac produced for Sultan Mehmed II*, 1452–3, detail. Levant-grain leather of dark red-brown colour, lined with paper. From Julian Raby and Zeren Tanindi, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century*, ed. by Tim Stanley (London: Azimuth Editions, 1993), p. 126, cat. 5.



Figure 195: San Zaccaria, Venice, detail of stall-back E14



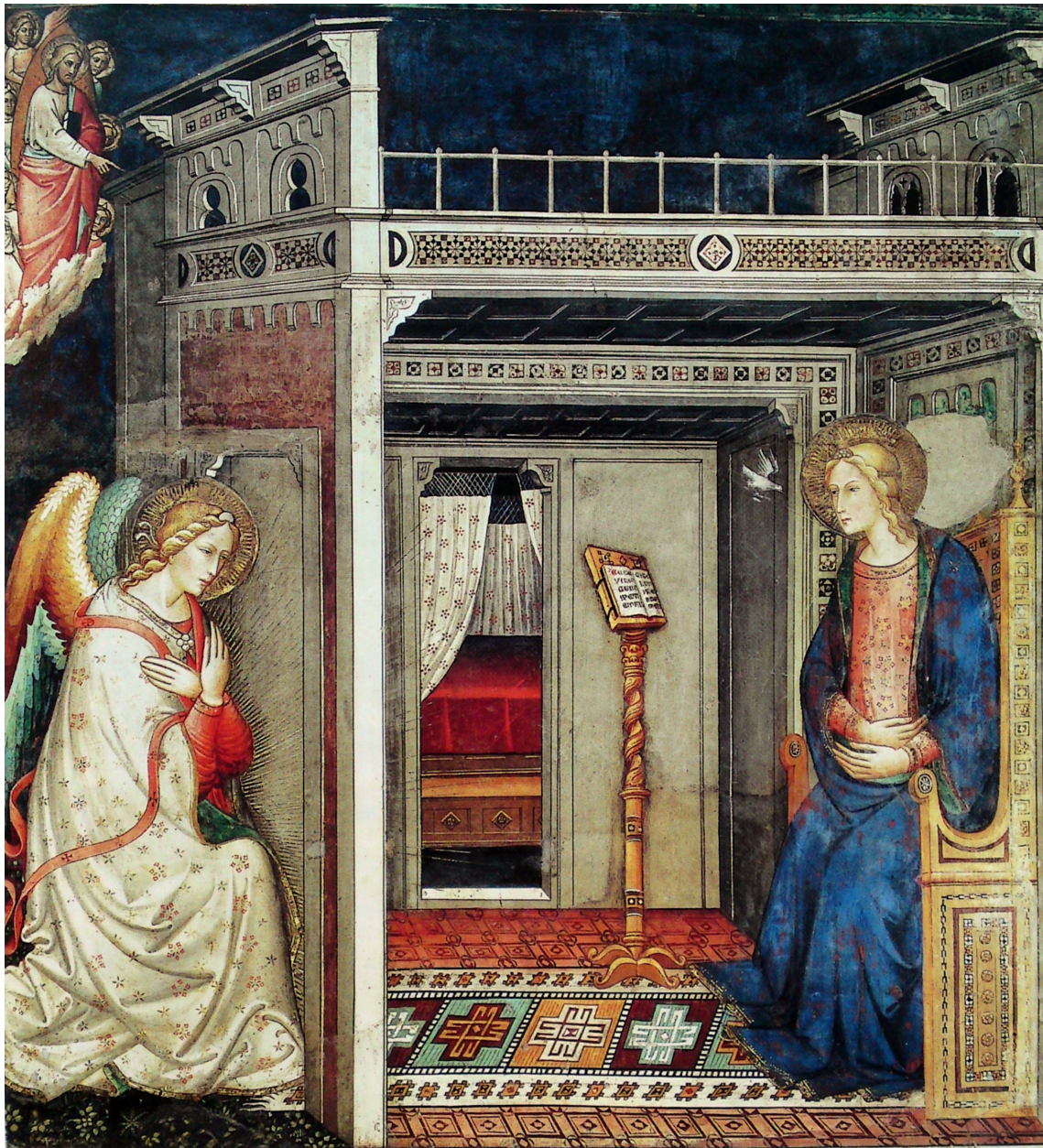


Figure 196: Pietro di Miniato, *Annunciation*, 1390s. Florence, Santa Maria Novella, contro-façade. Image from Marco Spallanzani, *Oriental Rugs in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 2007), fig. 19.





(a) Verona, Sant'Anastasia, choir stall N11



(b) Milan, Santa Maria delle Grazie, choir stall 26

Figure 197: Depictions of carpets in North-Italian choir stalls



(a) Tempietto Longobardo, Cividale del Friuli, detail of choir stalls



(b) Santa Trinità, Parma, detail of seat-back of substall

Figure 198: Geometric patterns in Benedictine nuns' stalls





(a) Stall-back S2



(b) Stall-back N9

Figure 199: Sant'Uldarico, Parma, choir stalls





(a) Detail of stall-back

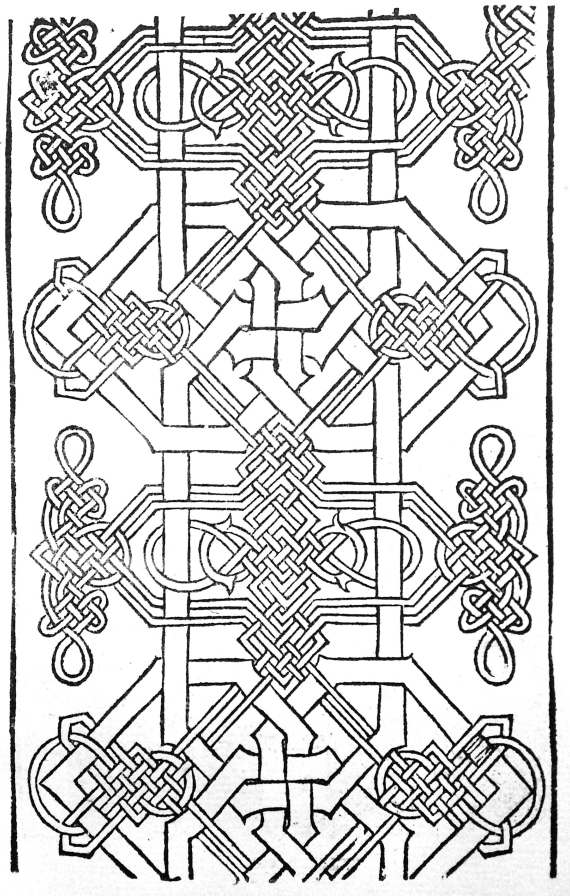


(b) Detail of arm-rest

Figure 200: Sant'Uldarico, Parma, abbess' stall (N1)



Figure 201: Sant'Uldarico, Parma, stall-back N12



(a) Design on fol. 25r.



(b) Design on fol. 6r.

Figure 202: Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, *Esemplario nuovo che insegna ale Donne a cuscire, a reccamare, et a disegnare a ciascuno. Et anchora e di grande utilita ad ogni Artista, per esser il disegno a ogniuno necessario* (first printed 1531).



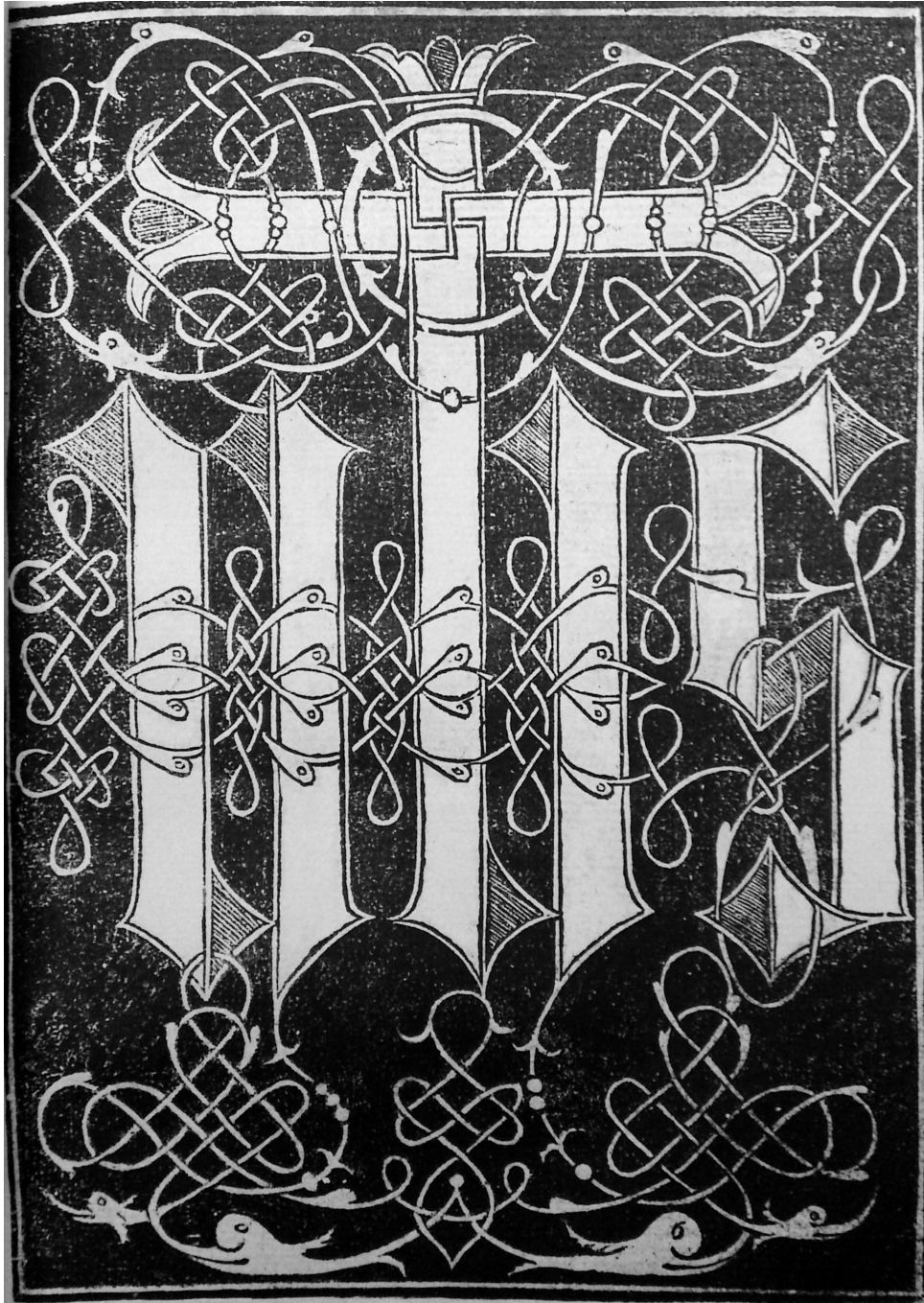


Figure 203: Tagliente (1531), design on fol. 27r.



Figure 204: San Zaccaria, Venice, mosaic pavement in present Chapel of Sant'Atanasio



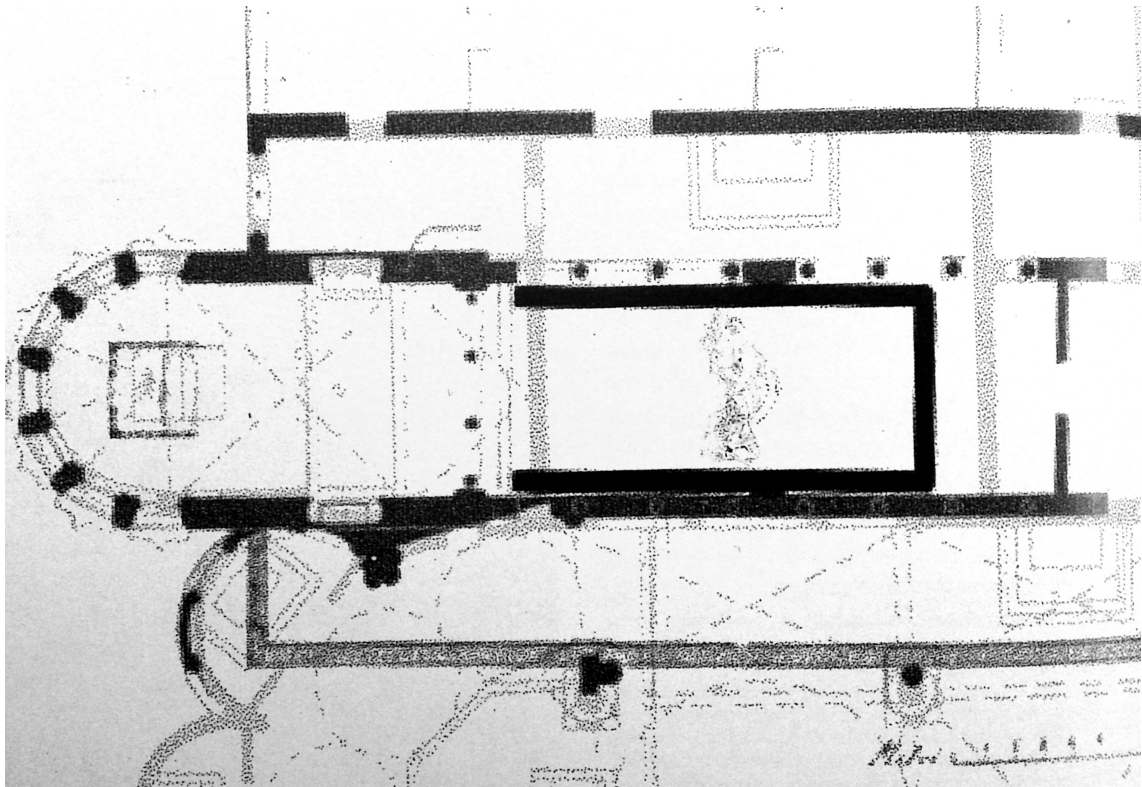
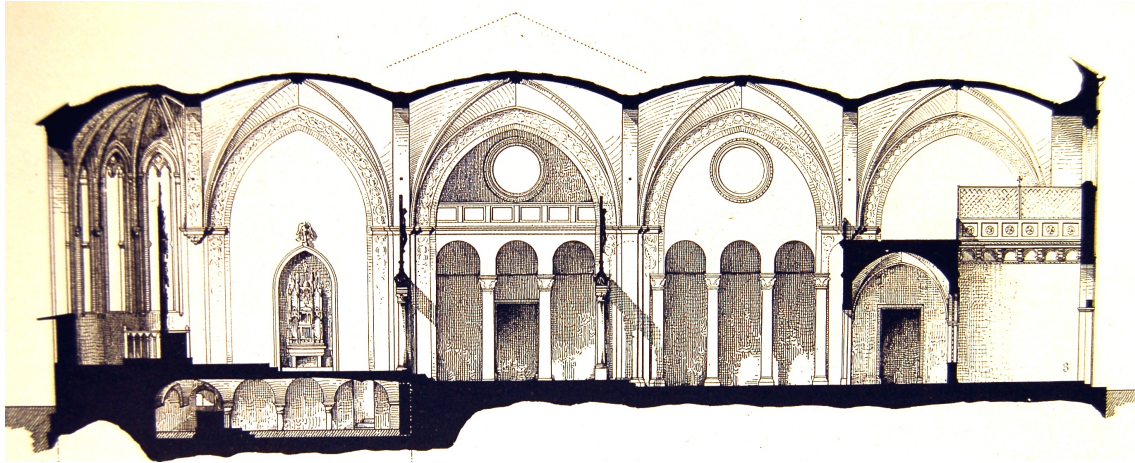
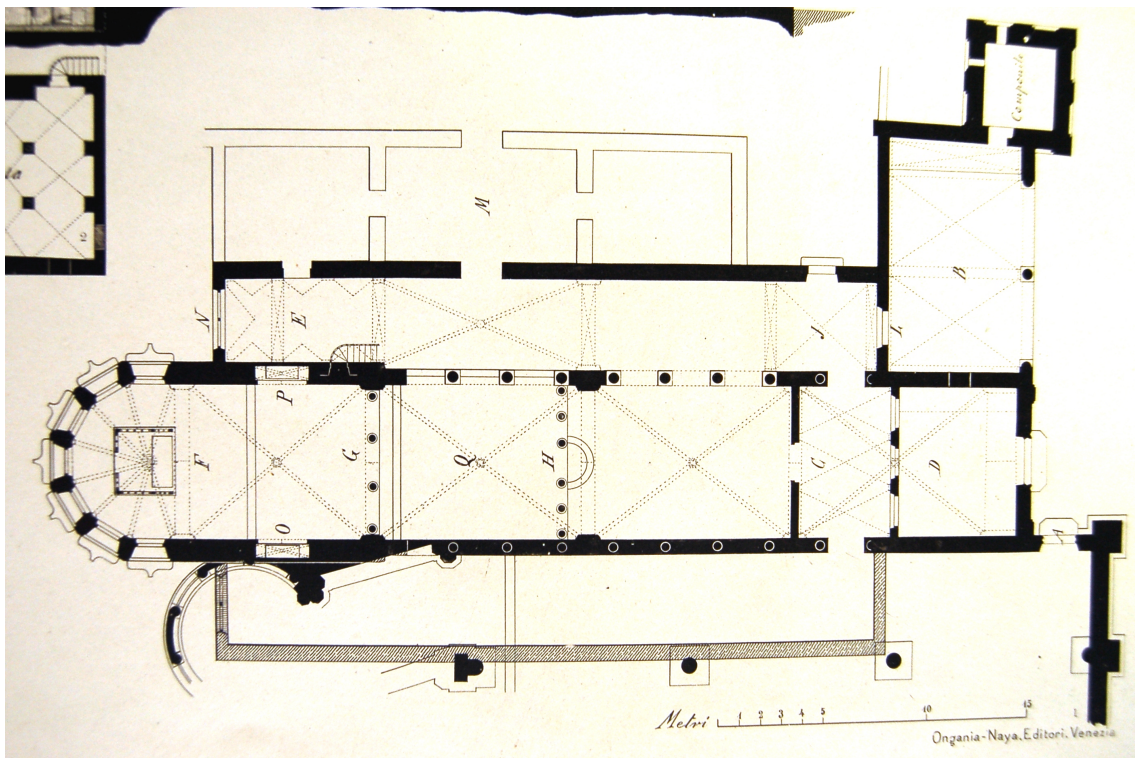


Figure 205: Roberto Bergamaschi, *Reconstruction of choir in San Zaccaria*, from Bernard Aikema, 'La Cappella d'oro di San Zaccaria: arte, religione e politica nella Venezia del doge Foscari', *Arte Veneta* 57 (2000), p. 38.



(a) Elevation



(b) Plan

Figure 206: *Reconstruction of the old church of San Zaccaria*, from Pietro Paoletti, *L'architettura e la scultura del rinascimento in Venezia* (Venice: Ongania-Naya Editori, 1893–1897), vol. 1, plate 31.

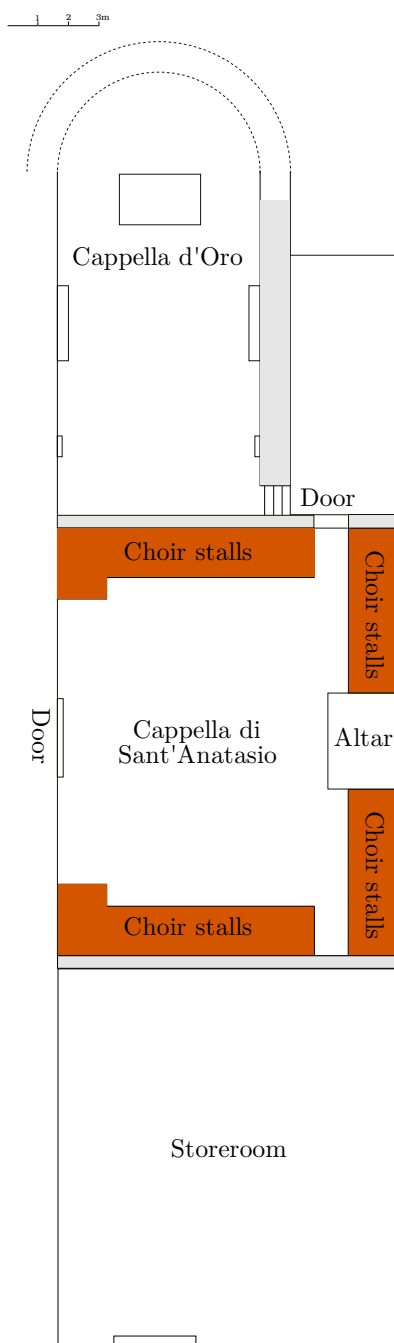


Figure 207: Position of stalls in present-day Cappella di Sant'Atanasio, San Zaccaria.

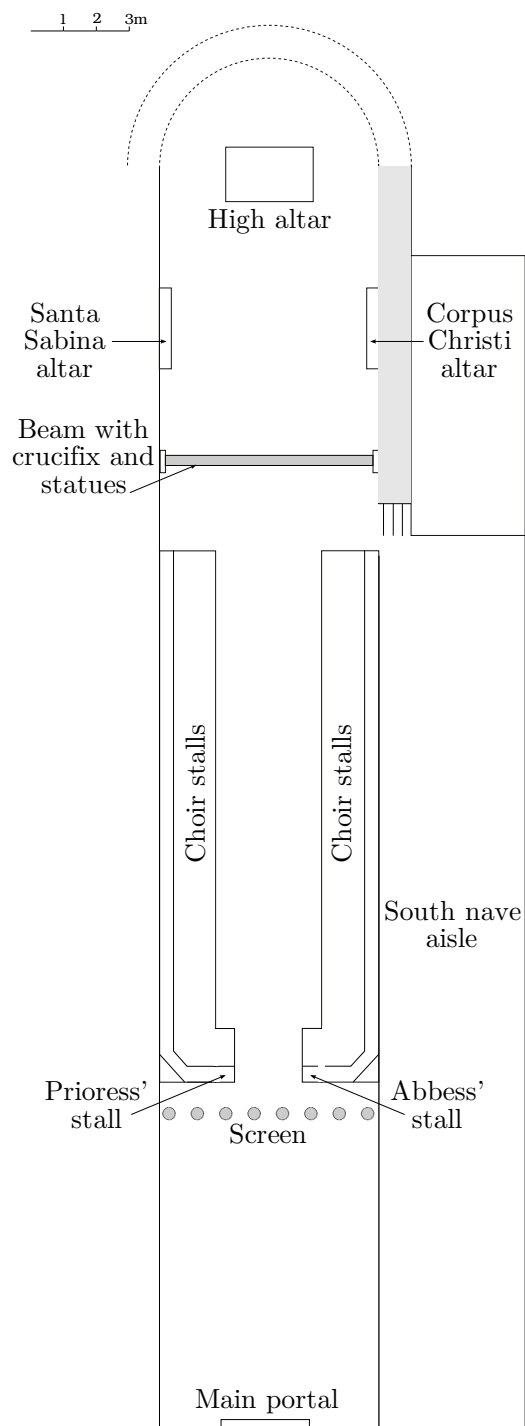


Figure 208: Author's reconstruction of the choir of San Zaccaria, Venice

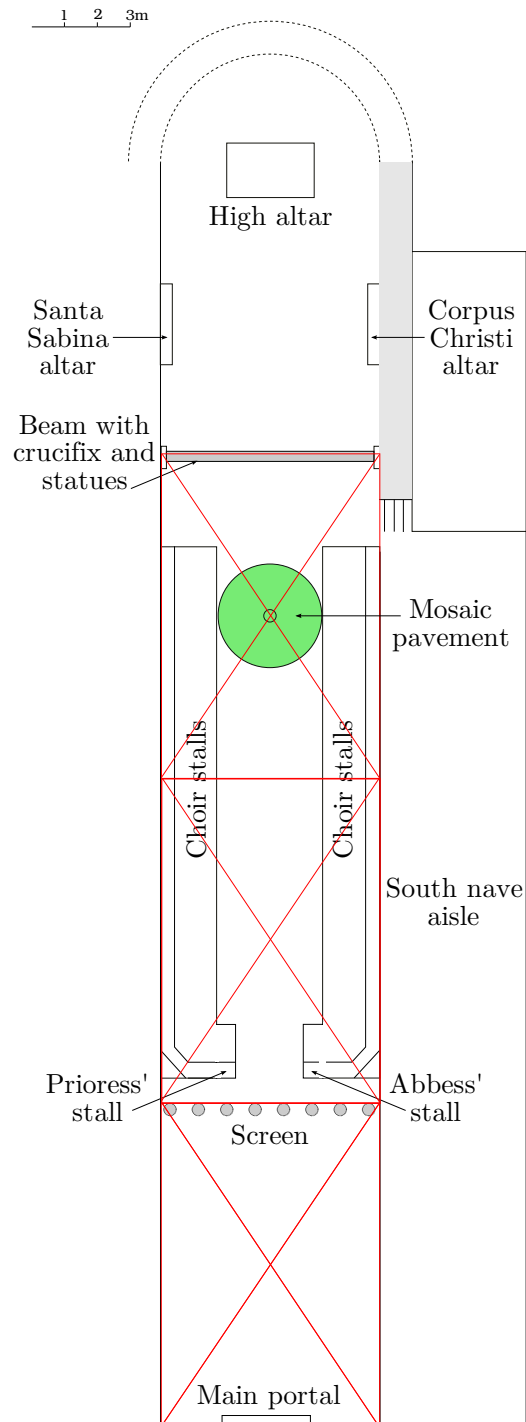
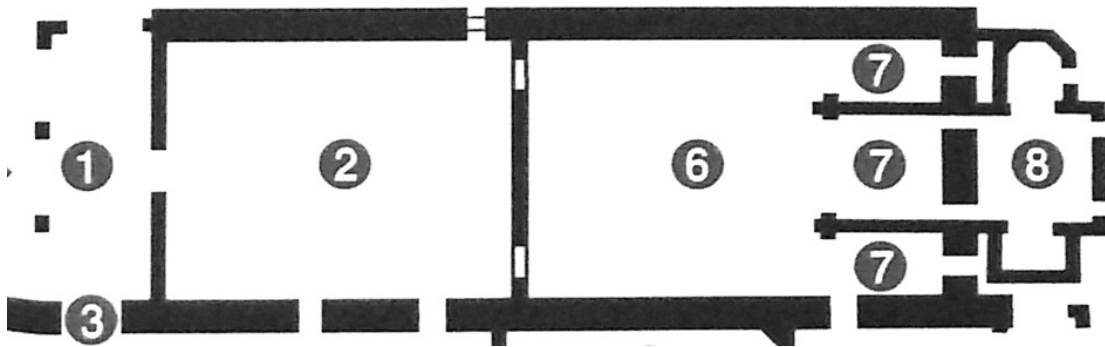


Figure 209: Author's reconstruction of the choir of San Zaccaria, Venice, showing position of nave bays and mosaic pavement



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(a) Plan of church



(b) View of choir (image from postcard)

Figure 211: Sant'Antonio in Polesine, Ferrara





Figure 212: Sant'Alvise, Venice, raised choir.





Figure 213: Santa Giulia, Brescia, view of choir facing east.



Figure 214: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, view of choir screen towards high altar





Figure 215: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, view of choir stalls towards west



Figure 216: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of choir stalls

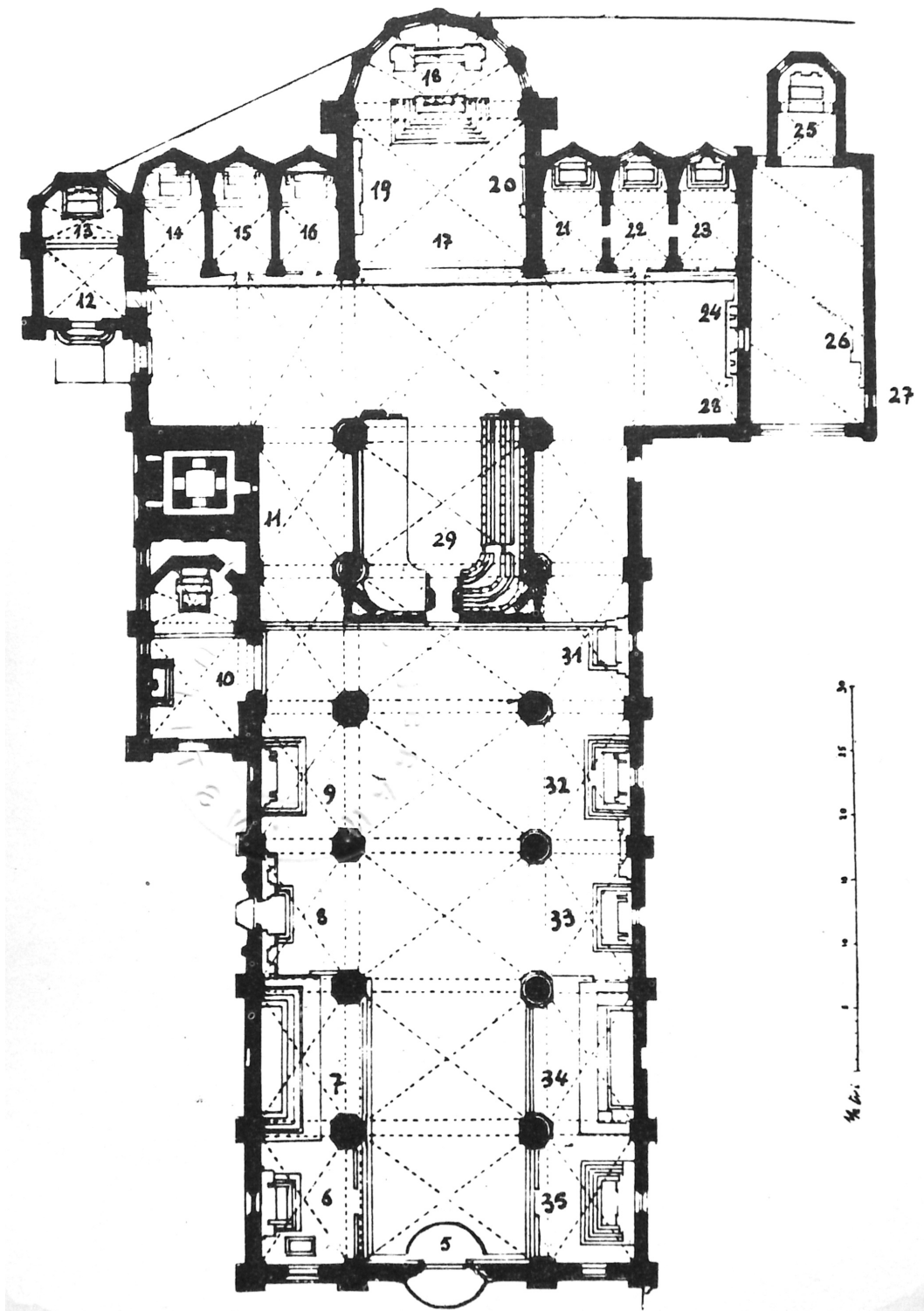


Figure 217: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, plan of church from Giuseppe Ungaro, *La basilica dei Frari, Venezia* (Padua: Messaggero, 1968), p. 4.





Figure 218: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, fifth nave pier on right.



Figure 219: Giovanni Bellini, *The Pesaro altarpiece*, 1488. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, sacristy.





Figure 220: San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna, choir stalls

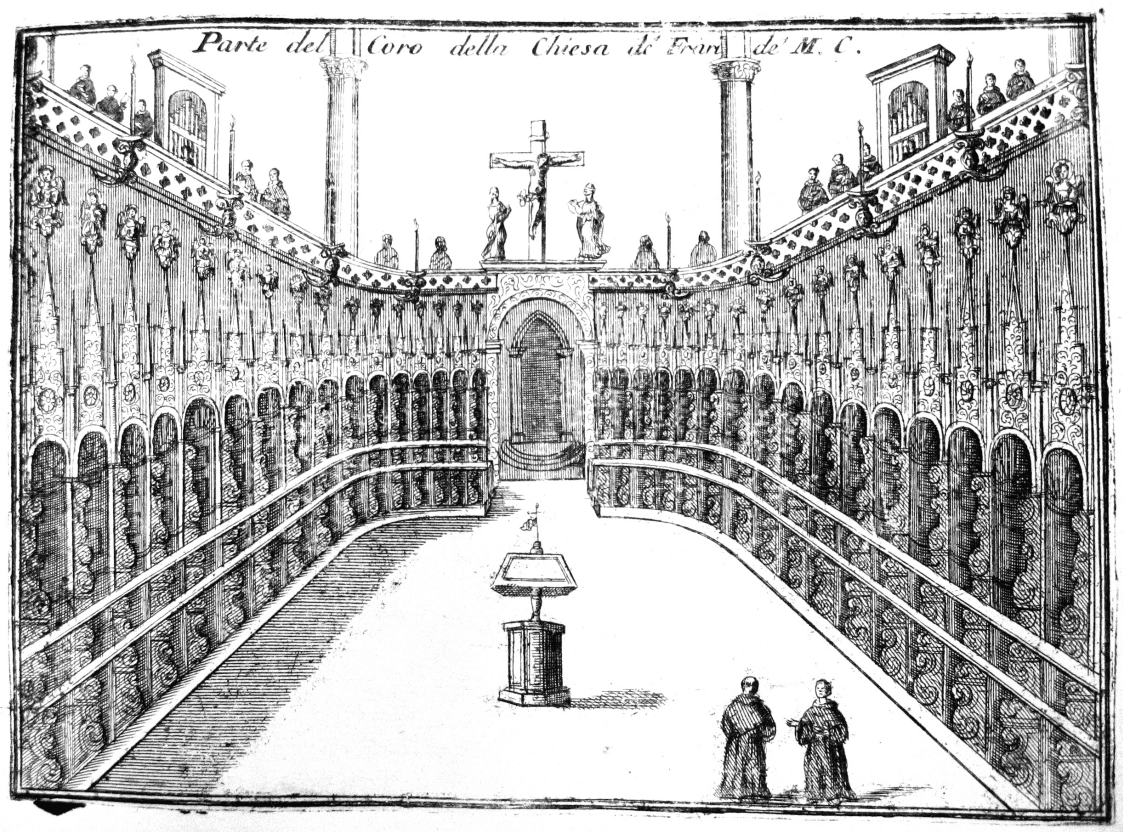


Figure 221: Vincenzo Coronelli, *Parte del coro della Chiesa de' Frari*, from *Vincenzo Coronelli, Singolarità di Venezia e del Serenissimo suo dominio* (Venice 1709)



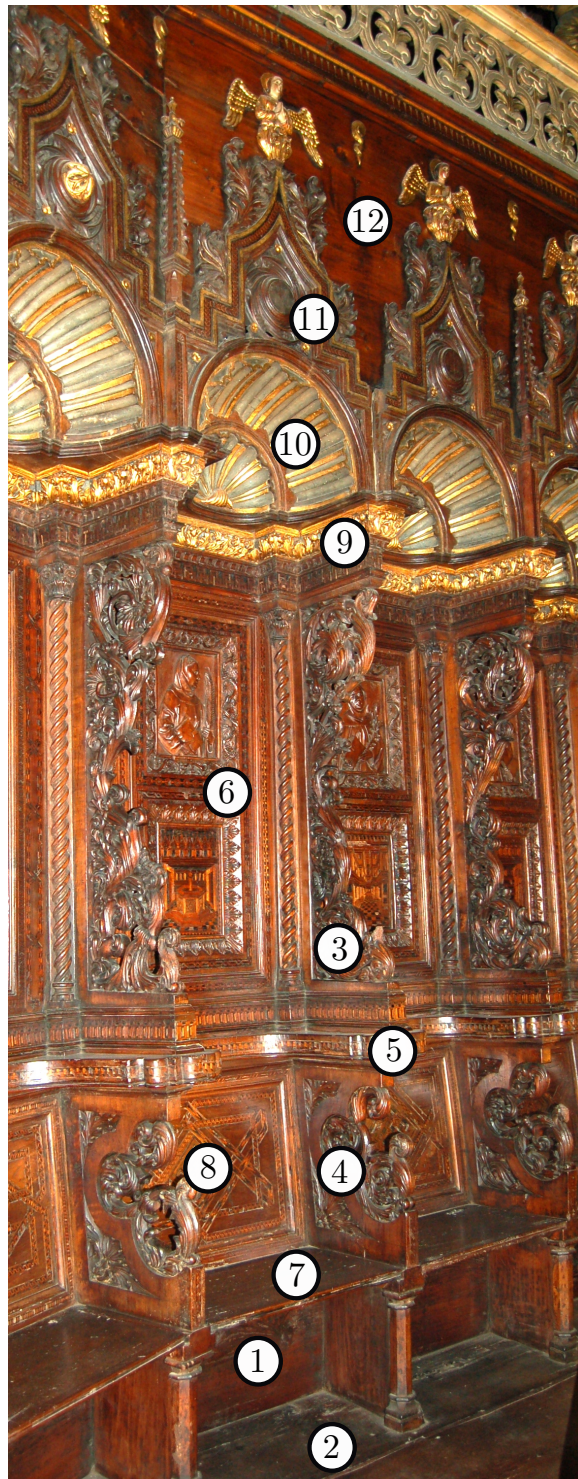


Figure 222: Diagram of Frari stalls



Figure 223: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir stalls, detail of panel below seat.



Figure 224: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir stalls, detail of canopy.





Figure 225: Zadar Cathedral, choir stalls





Figure 226: Trogir Cathedral, detail of choir stall canopy.





Figure 227: Bartolomeo Vivarini, *St Mark Altarpiece*, 1474. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, chapel of St Mark. Image from [http://www.wga.hu/cgi-bin/highlight.cgi?file=html/v/vivarini/bartolom/frari/st\\_mark.html&find=frari](http://www.wga.hu/cgi-bin/highlight.cgi?file=html/v/vivarini/bartolom/frari/st_mark.html&find=frari), accessed 15 April 2009

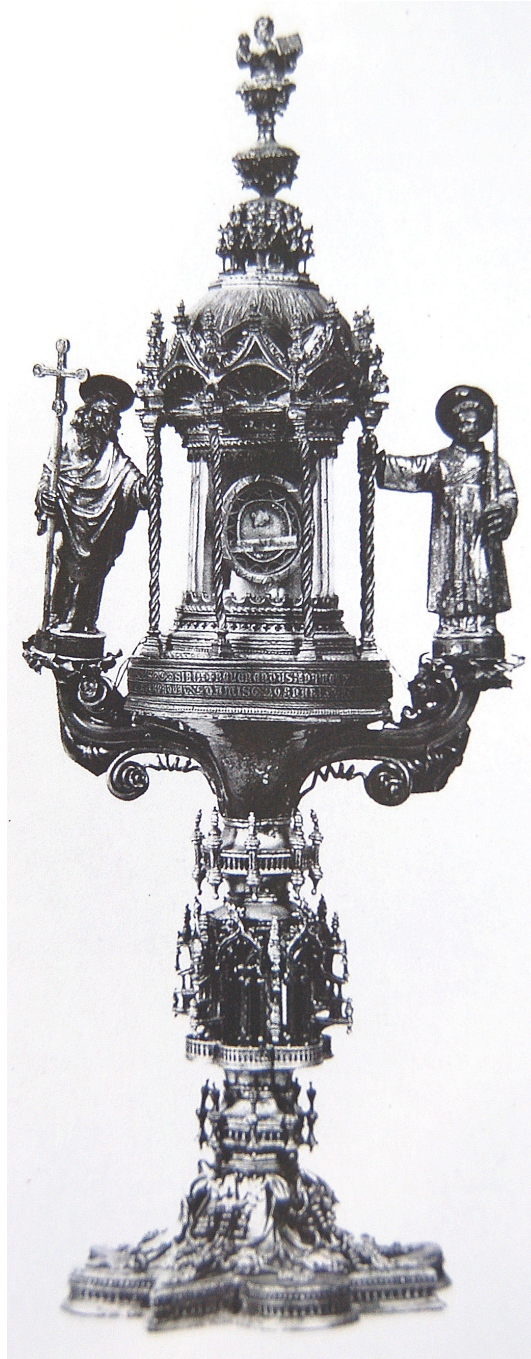


Figure 228: *Reliquary of a bone of St Stephen and of the Cross of St Andrew, 1440s, Basilica del Santo, Padua*





Figure 229: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of stall-back S11

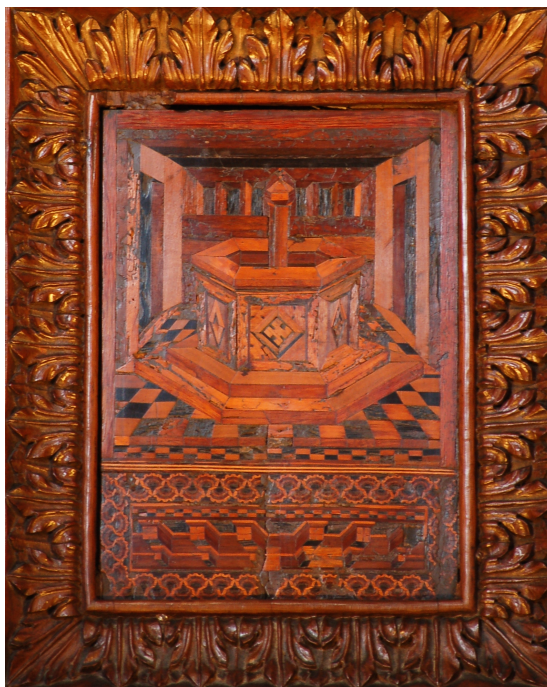


Figure 230: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of stall-back N12

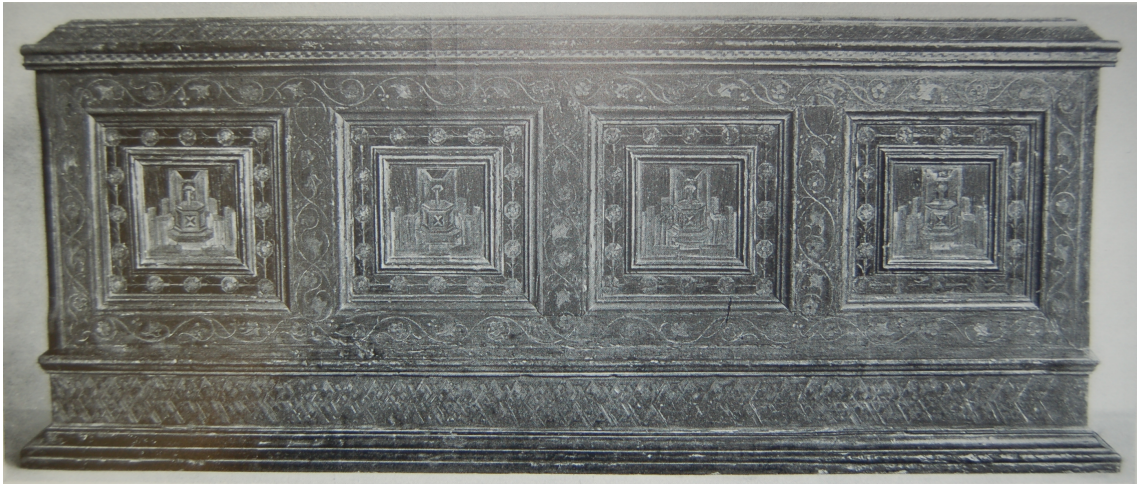


Figure 231: Intarsia *cassone*, Bode Museum, Berlin. Image from Frida Schottmüller, *Wohnungskultur und Möbel der Italienischen Renaissance*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Julius Hoffman, 1928), p. 45, fig. 100.

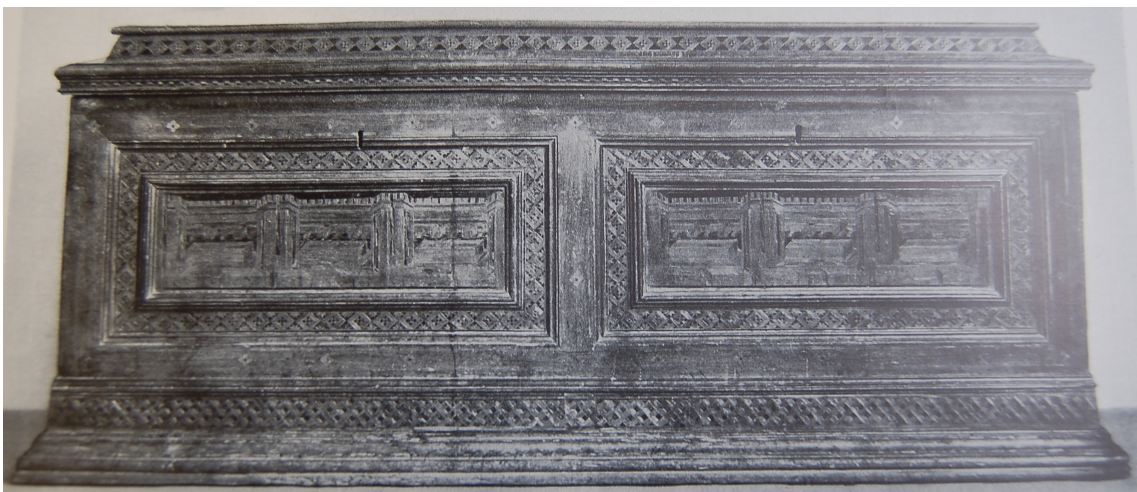


Figure 232: Intarsia *cassone*, Bode Museum, Berlin. Image from Schottmüller (1928), p. 44, fig. 98.





Figure 233: Sant'Anastasia, Verona, sacristy door



(a) Castle motif



(b) Font motif

Figure 234: Santi Nazaro e Celso, Verona, details of sacristy cupboard





Figure 235: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of stall N1



Figure 236: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of stall-back S1





Figure 237: *Man of Sorrows*, thirteenth century, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, pier between the first and second chapels to the right of the high altar



Figure 238: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, boss of crossing bay.





Figure 239: Basilica del Santo, Padua, intarsia panel from choir stalls



Figure 240: Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi. Choir stalls in the north transept of the Upper Church. Image from Giorgio Bonsanti, ed., *La Basilica di San Francesco ad Assisi—Basilica superiore* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2002), vol. 2, p. 1075, fig. 2137.





(a) Andrew



(b) Jerome

Figure 241: *Figures of saints Andrew and Jerome*. Museo di Santo Stefano, Venice

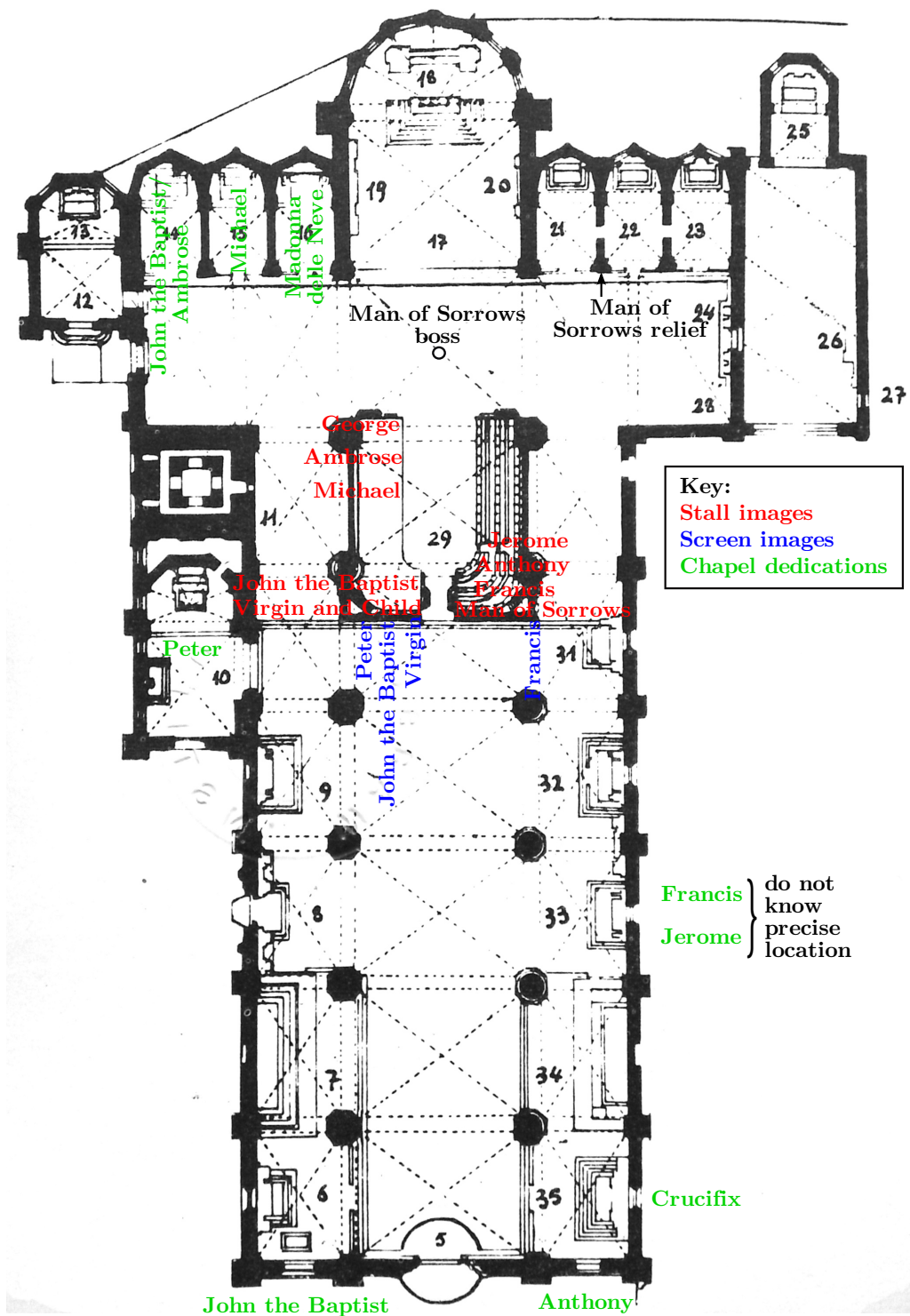


Figure 242: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, diagram showing location of images and chapels



Figure 243: Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone, Spilimbergo, view of choir stalls (formerly in Santa Maria, Spilimbergo)





Figure 244: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of stall N12



Figure 245: Santi Giuseppe e Pantaleone, Spilimbergo detail of choir stalls

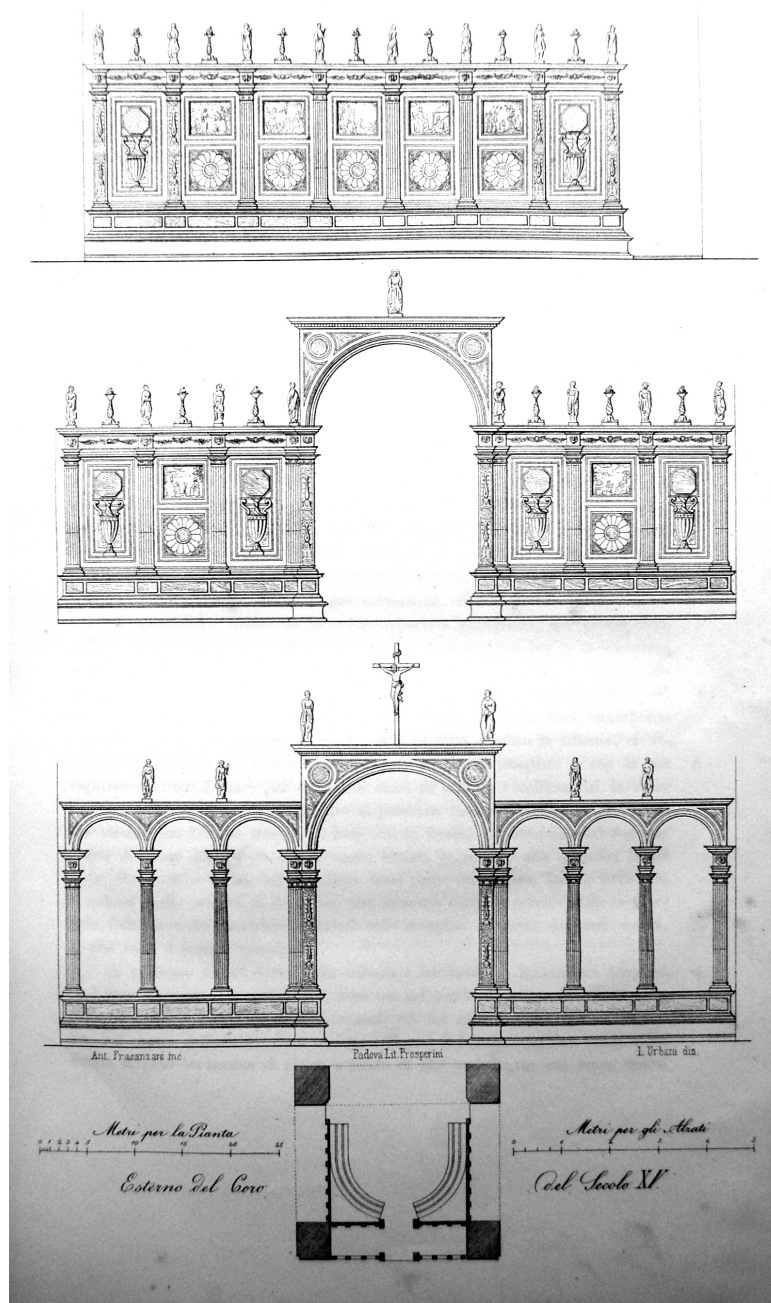


Figure 246: Lorenzo Urbani, *Reconstruction of Santo choir*, from Gonzati (1852), p. 68.

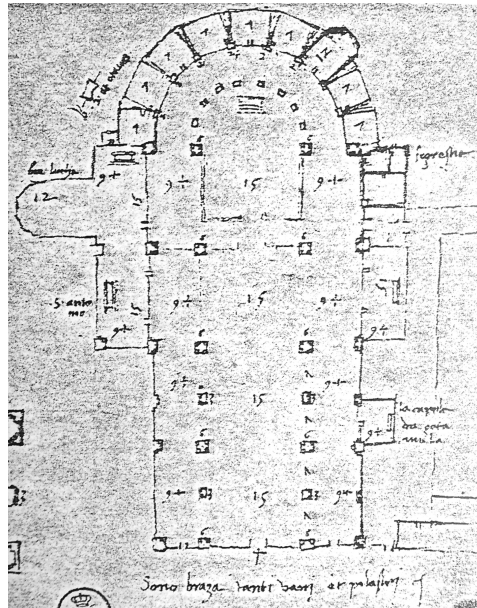


Figure 247: Sixteenth-century plan of the Basilica del Santo. Florence, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe degli Uffizi, n. 3205. Image from Andrea Calore, 'Il coro e il presbiterio della basilica del Santo. Vicende storiche e artistiche nel sec. XV', *Il Santo. Rivista francescana di storia dottrina arte* 38, no. 1–2 (1998), plate 3.

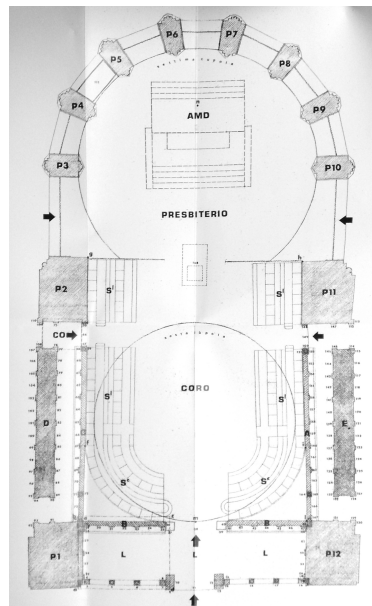


Figure 248: Calore's reconstruction of the choir area in the Basilica del Santo. Image from Calore (1998), plate opposite p. 81.





Figure 249: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir screen, reliefs of the Doctors of the Church beneath right pulpit





Figure 250: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir screen, relief of donor





Figure 251: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir screen, detail of wooden crucifix



Figure 252: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, choir screen, St Peter



Figure 253: San Francesco della Vigna, Venice, Badoer–Giustiniani Chapel, view of south side



Figure 254: San Giobbe, Venice, relief of John the Baptist on chancel architrave



Figure 255: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, relief of John the Baptist on choir screen





Figure 256: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, detail of high altarpiece frame



Figure 257: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, view of high altarpiece from centre of third nave bay.





Figure 258: Baldassare Longhena, *Tomb of Doge Giovanni Pesaro*, 1665–69. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice.





Figure 259: Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice, relief above side portal.



Figure 260: Evangelista da Zara, *Reliquary of the Holy Blood*, 1485. Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice.



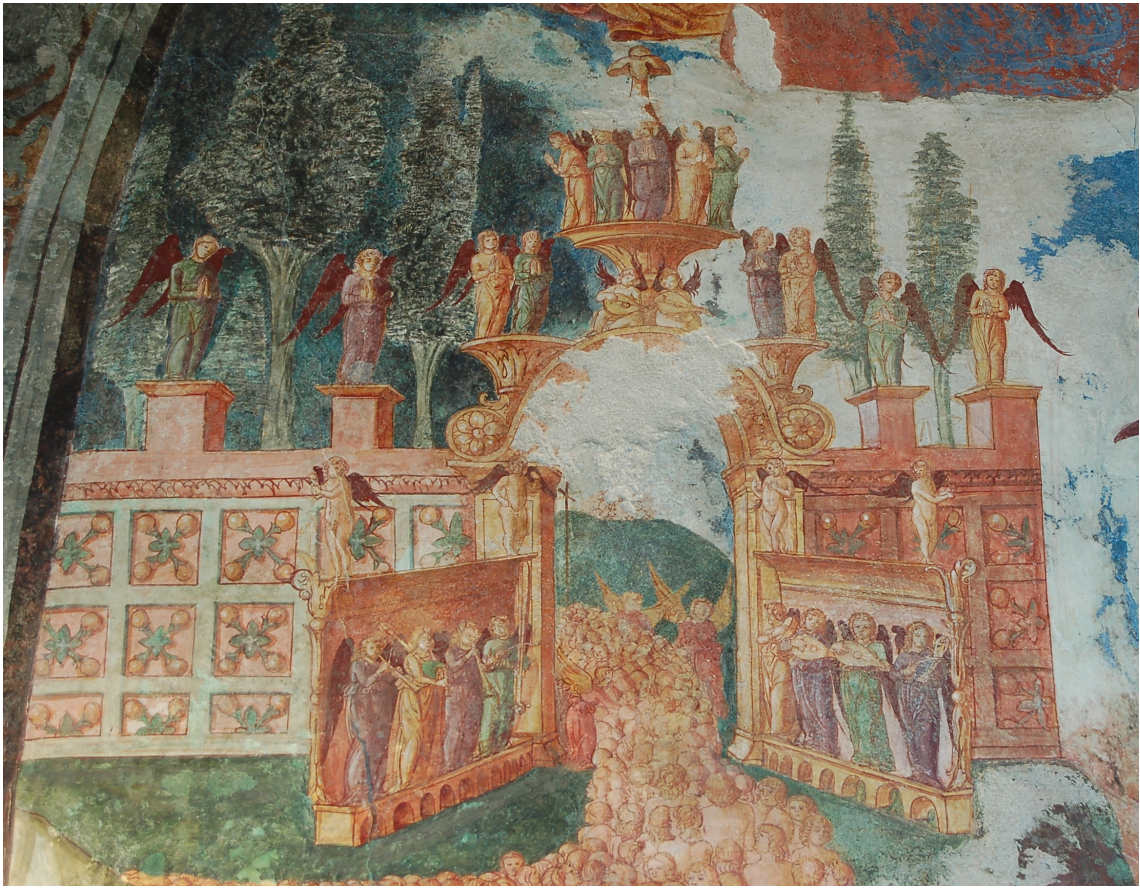


Figure 261: Gianfrancesco da Tolmezzo, *Last Judgement*, 1480s, Sant'Antonio, Barbeano



Figure 262: Spilimbergo Cathedral, nave pulpit



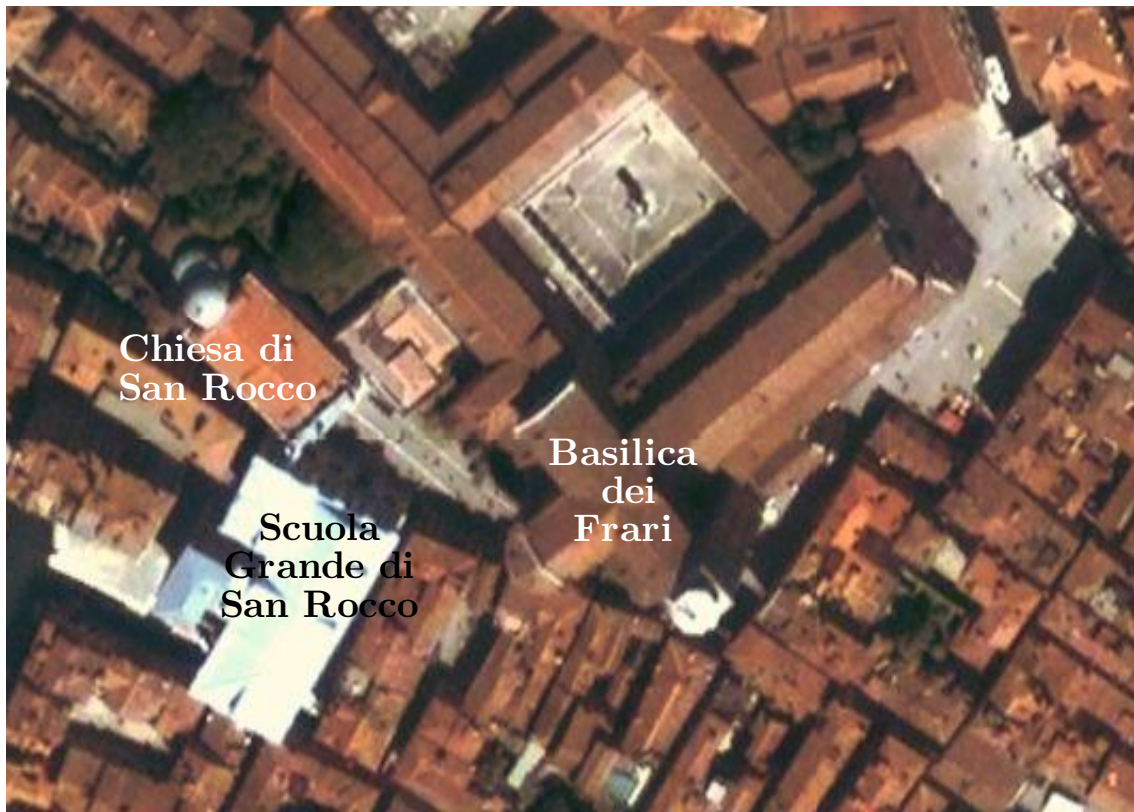


Figure 263: Map showing the Basilica dei Frari, the church and Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Map from *Google Maps*, [http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&source=s\\_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=venice&sll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=31.839416,58.447266&ie=UTF8&ll=45.436673,12.325957&spn=0.00172,0.003567&t=k&z=18](http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=venice&sll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=31.839416,58.447266&ie=UTF8&ll=45.436673,12.325957&spn=0.00172,0.003567&t=k&z=18) (accessed 11 June 2009)